# Appearance and reality. Socrates' aims and strategies in Plato's Cratylus

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In today's Western societies, people talk about the need to justify education and research in the humanities. I do believe this need is real, but the ones to which we need to justify our choice to spend time and resources on education and research, are not the members of our own societies, but those people who do not live in peace and cannot live without worry of survival.

In the light of these considerations, I dedicate this work to chance and circumstance, knowing that I could very well have spent my time doing something else.

# Introduction

At the beginning of Plato's *Cratylus*, Socrates meets the two other characters of the dialogue, Cratylus and Hermogenes, who have been discussing the correctness of names. Cratylus holds that what determines the correctness of names is nature, while Hermogenes regards agreement as the determining factor. Hermogenes asks Socrates to try to explain Cratylus' view or, even better, to present his own view of the topic. In response, Socrates proposes that they make a shared inquiry into the correctness of names, and that they submit both Hermogenes' and Cratylus' view to discussion in order to see which view is right (383a-384c). The rest of the dialogue develops in accordance with this plan. In the first part of the dialogue, Socrates and Hermogenes begin their shared inquiry by submitting Hermogenes' view to discussion. What Socrates apparently tries to achieve here is to show Hermogenes that nature, and not agreement, determines the correctness of names (384c-390e). In the second part of the dialogue, Socrates and Hermogenes carry on their inquiry by interpreting a host of Greek names and assessing their correctness. Again, what Socrates apparently tries to achieve here is to show Hermogenes that nature, and not agreement, determines the correctness of names (390e-427c). Finally, in the third part of the dialogue, Socrates and Cratylus begin their shared inquiry by comparing Cratylus' view of natural correctness to the main results of the preceding discussion between Socrates and Hermogenes. What Socrates apparently tries to achieve here is to show Cratylus that his views about the correctness of names cannot be right (427c-440e).

This thesis offers an interpretation of Plato's *Cratylus*. The thesis consists of three chapters corresponding to the three parts of the dialogue. Each chapter offers an attempt to show that, despite reasons for doubt, we should treat Socrates' apparent aims in the conversation with the other interlocutors as his real aims. That is, in the first and second part of the dialogue, we should treat Socrates as genuinely attempting to convince Hermogenes that there is a natural correctness of names. Similarly, in the third part of the dialogue, we should treat Socrates as genuinely attempting to convince Cratylus to give up his extreme and idiosyncratic account of the natural correctness of names. Each chapter offers an attempt to show that we can remove the reasons for doubt by understanding Socrates as seeking to achieve his aims by employing a strategy which is especially designed to deal with the relevant interlocutor's views and character.

In the first chapter, it is argued that Hermogenes is presented as a Socratic philosopher, and that the strategy behind Socrates' initial arguments (385e-387d) is to remind Hermogenes of Socratic views he already shares and to prepare him for the decisive arguments in favour of natural correctness which come later in the first part of the dialogue (388c-390e). For this reason, we should not doubt that Socrates genuinely attempts to convince Hermogenes, just because his argument about the nature of things is invalid and his argument about the nature of actions is insufficiently specific to serve as decisive evidence in favour of the account of natural correctness.

In the second chapter, it is argued that Socrates responds to Hermogenes' request for a more specific account of natural correctness, not by explaining and illustrating (or purporting to explain and illustrate) the view that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things, but by identifying a model of natural correctness in the principle that a thing's name should signify the thing's nature. For this reason, we should not doubt that Socrates genuinely attempts to convince Hermogenes, just because Socrates believes that the interpretation of names cannot provide knowledge of things.

In the third chapter, it is argued that Cratylus is presented as a stubborn and overconfident character with extreme and idiosyncratic views, and that Socrates uses more forceful, if less fair-minded, forms of argumentation in his conversation with Cratylus because he regards it as impossible to change Cratylus' mind by means of fair and open argumentation. For this reason, we should not doubt that Socrates genuinely attempts to convince Cratylus to give up his extreme and idiosyncratic account of the natural correctness of names (while maintaining his own account of the natural correctness of names), just because Socrates brings Cratylus to the conclusion that agreement determines or co-determines the correctness of names.

In the rest of this general introduction, I try to explain, briefly, the main background assumptions which I bring to the interpretation of the *Cratylus*.

First, I assume that Plato has constructed the Socrates in his dialogues as always having the same general views and the same general character. Of course, in some dialogues Socrates may develop his views differently than in other dialogues, depending on the interlocutor and the general atmosphere of the dialogue. Similarly, sometimes Socrates develops views which go against his own views for the sake of arguing against the position of his interlocutor or for the sake of exploring an idea. But this does not change the fact that, at a fundamental level, Socrates' general views are always the same in Plato's dialogues. Therefore, the views which I regard as Socratic in Plato's dialogues are those which Socrates is made to propose and defend, especially those which contrast with popular Greek views and the views of other philosophers who are present, or referred to, in the dialogues. As a consequence, I treat as Socratic views, not only the ethical views known from the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias* (e.g. the unity of virtue), but also the political and metaphysical views which Socrates expounds in the *Republic* (e.g. the role of the *nomothetes* or the account of the forms).

I make no claims about the relation between the Socrates in Plato's dialogues and the historical Socrates, except that I regard it as likely that Plato considered the historical Socrates as having views resembling those which he is made to expound in the dialogues, including the political and metaphysical views. In that case, Plato's view of the historical Socrates seems to have differed from Aristotle's view of the historical Socrates; something I regard as entirely possible.[1]

Thus, regarding the classic question about the relation between the Socrates in Plato's dialogues and the historical Socrates, I find myself in disagreement with the common view that Plato has constructed the Socrates in certain dialogues (the so-called early Socratic dialogues) so as to express the views of the historical Socrates and the Socrates in certain other dialogues (the so-called middle Platonic dialogues) so as to express Plato's own views, which are taken to be importantly different from the views of the historical Socrates.[2]

Similarly, I make no claims about the relation between, on the one hand, the Hermogenes and the Cratylus in the *Cratylus* and, on the other hand, the historical correlates to these characters. I only note that the Hermogenes in Plato's *Phaedo* (59b) and in Xenophon's writings[3] is described as a follower and a friend of Socrates, and that the Cratylus in Aristotle's writings[4] is described as an uncompromising character who developed an extreme and idiosyncratic version of Heracliteanism.[5]

Second, I assume that all of Plato's dialogues are constructed so as to be read in the light of each other. For this reason, I regard it as permitted, indeed as necessary, to draw on other dialogues in order to understand what may be implied in a given dialogue. As a consequence, I constrain the use of other dialogues to illuminate the *Cratylus*, not by considerations of Plato's philosophical development or the chronology of the dialogues, but by considerations of similarity between the dialogues regarding topic and characters, among other things.

I make no claims about Plato's philosophical development or about the chronology of the dialogues, mainly because I do not regard the available evidence as a sufficient basis for making such claims, but also because I am not convinced that it should make any great difference to our interpretation of the dialogues, even if we did have a sufficient evidential basis for making such claims. That is, if we want to understand Plato's *oeuvre*, we should read it as one work (in an extended sense of that word) rather than slice it up into developmental stages or chronological groups. This statement is not an instantiation of a general *a priori* thesis about how to read the *oeuvre* of writers

[1] For an account of Aristotle's view of the historical Socrates, see e.g. Irwin 1995: 8-11; Irwin 2008: 78, 83.

[2] Vlastos 1991: 45-80; Irwin 1995: 3-16; Irwin 2008: 6-14; Williams 1999: 77-84; Penner 2002; Sedley 2003: 6-7; Brickhouse and Smith 2010: 11-42.

[3] *Ap.*; *Mem.* 1.2.48, 2.10, 4.8; *Symp.* 1.3, 3.14, 4.46-49, 6.1-4, 8.3., 8.12.

[4] *Metaph.* 987a-b, 1010a; *Rhet.* 1417b

[5] There have been several attempts to reconstruct the philosophical development of the historical Cratylus, e.g. Kirk 1951; Allan 1954; Sedley 2003: 16-21; Ademollo 2011: 14-18.

or philosophers, but rather a specific *a posteriori* statement about how to read *Plato's oeuvre*.

Thus, regarding the question about Plato's development or the chronology of the dialogues (and the supposed benefits of using these approaches to Plato's *oeuvre*), I find myself in disagreement with the common view that Plato's dialogues should be divided into (roughly) three chronological groups corresponding to the three major stages in Plato's philosophical development, and that the use of this chronological and developmental approach to Plato's dialogues constitutes a leap forward in the interpretation of Plato.[6]

Third, I assume that the main speaker in Plato's dialogues is constructed so as to express Plato's ethical and philosophical views. That is, the main speaker's arguments and views as well as his treatment of other characters can and should be taken as in general agreement with Plato's own ethical and philosophical outlook. That is not to say that the main speaker's arguments and conclusions necessarily exhaust Plato's position on the topic at the moment of writing the dialogue, or that the main speaker in Plato's dialogues always behaves in ways Plato would applaud. All characters in Plato's dialogues are constructed with a human element, and even Socrates can seem vain, impatient, and too easily provoked. Nonetheless, the main speaker in Plato's dialogues is so clearly constructed as an ethically and philosophically superior character that we are entitled to treat his arguments and views as well as his treatment of other characters as in general agreement with Plato's own ethical and philosophical outlook.

Thus, regarding the question about the relation between the main speaker in Plato's dialogues and Plato's own views, I find myself in general agreement with the common view that the main speaker should be taken as expressing Plato's views.[7] By the same token, I find myself in disagreement with the view that the main speaker should not be taken as expressing Plato's views.[8] This is not to deny that Plato has constructed some of his dialogues so as to leave the reader with a puzzle without a clear solution, or so as to make it difficult for the reader to see exactly what views the main speaker holds. What can explain this? In some cases, Plato may not have had a clear view of the topic at the time of writing the dialogue. But the most important explanation, I believe, is that Plato did not only write dialogues in order set out his ethical and philosophical views. He also wrote dialogues in order to show the dynamic between different types of character and to engage the reader in the intertwined tasks of interpretation and philosophical reflection. Given this aim, we can see why Plato would construct his dialogues so as to leave the reader with a puzzle without a clear solution, or so as to make it difficult for the reader to see exactly what views the main speaker holds.

Fourth, I assume that Plato has constructed the main speaker in his dialogues as always having a general aim for his conversation with the other characters as well as a

[6] Sedley 2003: 6-7; Irwin 2008: 77-84.

[7] Irwin 2008: 84-85.

[8] For different versions of this view, see e.g. the essays in Press 2000.

strategy for how to achieve this aim. That is, even when Socrates in the *Cratylus* claims not to have knowledge about the correctness of names and invites the interlocutors to a shared inquiry, it would be a mistake to treat him as not having a specific agenda for the subsequent discussion. As it turns out, Socrates does have a rather detailed account of natural correctness. For this reason, I regard it as permitted, indeed as necessary, to identify Socrates' general aim and strategy in each of the three parts of the *Cratylus* and to use them as points of orientation to guide the interpretation of individual passages within the relevant part of the dialogue.

# Chapter 1

# A general account of natural correctness (383a-390e)

The *Cratylus* opens with Hermogenes asking Socrates to join the discussion with Cratylus about the correctness of names. Cratylus holds that there is a natural correctness of names which makes the names of things correct no matter what the people using those names might agree on. Hermogenes, on the other hand, believes that what makes the name of a thing correct is human agreement and nothing else. Hermogenes asks Socrates to try to explain Cratylus' view or, even better, to present his own view of the topic. In response, Socrates proposes that they make a shared inquiry into the correctness of names, and that they submit both Hermogenes' and Cratylus' view to discussion in order to see which view is right (383a1-384c9). Beginning with Hermogenes' view, Socrates makes him commit to the more specific claim that it is correct for any individual (whether a person or a community) to use any name for any thing if the individual has given that name to that thing (384c10-385e3). Socrates then confronts Hermogenes with the metaphysical views of Protagoras and Euthydemus in order to have him agree that, since they are wrong, things must have their own stable being (385e4-386e5). Socrates and Hermogenes further agree that actions have their own nature and that, as a consequence, the act of naming must be performed in the way in which it is natural to name things and for things to be named, and with the thing with which it is natural to name things (386e6-387d9). Socrates goes on to show Hermogenes that a name is an instrument for teaching and for separating being, and that name-giving is not a task for everyone, but the task of the expert name-maker (who is a *nomothetes* or "custom-giver") (387d10-389a4). Socrates and Hermogenes agree that the correctness of a name (like any product of expertise) depends on the form (and not the matter) of the name, and that the proper judge of the correctness of names is the expert user, the dialectian, and not the expert producer, the custom-giver (389a5-390d8). Finally, Socrates concludes that Hermogenes is wrong to think that name-giving is a simple task to be undertaken by anyone, and that Cratylus is right in claiming that names belong to things by nature and that not everyone is a name-maker (390d9-e5).

Thus, briefly put, in this part of the dialogue Socrates' aim apparently is to convince Hermogenes that nature, and not agreement, determines the correctness of names (384c-390e). The first main purpose of this chapter is to show that Socrates' apparent aim is his real aim. Let me explain.

Scholars generally treat Socrates' arguments about the nature of things (385e4-386e5) and the nature of actions (386e6-387d9) as the first crucial point at which Socrates shows (or purports to show) that Hermogenes' position cannot be right, and that there must be a natural correctness of names.[1] If we consider the quality of these arguments, however, the argument about the nature of things seems invalid, and the argument about the nature of actions seems insufficiently specific to serve as decisive evidence in favour of the account of natural correctness. This consideration might make us doubt that Socrates' apparent aim is his real aim. Why would Socrates put forward an invalid argument about the nature of things and an insufficiently specific argument about the nature of actions, unless his aim is not really to convince Hermogenes of the natural correctness of names, but rather to set out arguments in favour of the account only to show later in the dialogue that these arguments are not strong enough?

One way of removing this doubt is to reinterpret Socrates' arguments about the nature of things and the nature of actions in order to show that the argument about the nature of things really is valid, and that the argument about the nature of actions really is sufficiently specific to serve as crucial evidence in favour of the account of natural correctness.[2] However, this solution seems to violate the principle of fidelity by ascribing claims to Socrates which are clearly more moderate than those made by Socrates in the text. The important question, given this state of affairs, is how we can treat Socrates' apparent aim as his real aim without violating the principle of fidelity.

My own view, in brief, is that we must give up two basic assumptions shared by all scholars. First, we must give up the assumption that Socrates' arguments about the nature of things (385e4-386e5) and about the nature of actions (386e6-387d9) constitute the crucial point at which Socrates (apparently) shows that Hermogenes' position cannot be right, and that there must be a natural correctness of names. Rather, these arguments (385e4-387d9) merely *prepare* the ground for the decisive arguments which come towards the end of the first part of the dialogue (388c3-390e5). Second, we must give up the assumption that Socrates puts forward his arguments about the nature of things (385e4-386e5) and about the nature of actions (386e6-387d9) in order to convince Hermogenes of anything. Rather, these arguments are merely meant to *remind* Hermogenes of views he already shares. That is, the solution I propose contains two elements. First, accepting that Socrates' argument about the nature of things is invalid, and that Socrates' argument about the nature of actions is insufficiently specific to provide decisive support in favour of the account of natural correctness. Second,

[1] Sedley 2003: 54-58; Ademollo 2011: 100-106.

[2] For this kind of reinterpretation, cf. Sedley 2003: 57-8.

explaining these features *by reinterpreting the strategy behind these arguments*.

This brings us to the second main purpose of this chapter: to show that Socrates seeks to achieve his (both apparent and real) aim by employing a strategy which is especially designed to deal with Hermogenes' character as a Socratic philosopher. Traditionally, scholars have treated Hermogenes as an intellectually weak or silly person.[3] More recently, scholars have tried to rehabilitate Hermogenes and to show that, rather than being intellectually weak or silly, Hermogenes is "the voice of common sense" in the dialogue.[4] If we take the traditional or the more recent view of Hermogenes' character, however, it becomes difficult to understand why Socrates completes his argument about the nature of things swiftly and invalidly, since Hermogenes would be the kind of person who needs to be shown, carefully and validly, that things have their own nature. As I shall try to show, however, Hermogenes is presented neither as an intellectually weak or silly person nor as the voice of common sense. Rather, Hermogenes is presented as a sharp and experienced intellectual and, most importantly, as a Socratic philosopher. This feature of the dialogue is what allows us to understand the strategy which drives Socrates' line of argument in the first part of the dialogue. For instance, the reason why Socrates completes his argument about the nature of things swiftly and invalidly is that Hermogenes is a Socratic philosopher who already shares the Socratic view that things have their own nature and therefore only needs to be reminded of the main reasons in favour of this view. More generally, since Hermogenes is a Socratic philosopher, Socrates seeks to convince him that there is a natural correctness of names by building a general account of natural correctness in the form of an extended line of abstract argument based on central Socratic notions which Hermogenes already shares.

This brings us to the third main purpose of this chapter: to show that, if we keep in mind Socrates' strategy and Hermogenes' character, we get a very different, and much more Socratic, understanding of Socrates' account of natural correctness. Let me highlight one of the examples which bear most directly on Socrates' attempt to convince Hermogenes that nature, and not agreement, determines the correctness of names. In the third section of this part of the dialogue (387d10-389a4), Socrates concludes that name-giving is not a task for everyone, but the task of the expert name-maker (who is a *nomothetes* or "custom-giver"). Scholars generally treat this *nomothetes* either as invented *ad hoc* by Socrates as the personification of something purely impersonal (viz. the normative aspects of language)[5] or as a notion of a narrowly *linguistic* "legislator" which Socrates probably borrows from the Sophistic tradition.[6] As I shall try to show, however, Socrates' argument makes much better sense if we take him to be drawing on

[3] Grote 1865: 501; Méridier 1931: 34-36; Kretzmann 1971: 126-128; Kahn 1973: 158-159; Williams 1982: 89-90; Mackenzie 1986: 126-127; Baxter 1992: 17-21.

[4] Barney 2001: 40; Sedley 2003: 51-52.

[5] R. Robinson 1969b: 105; Kretzmann 1971: 129; Ackrill 1997: 42.

[6] Sedley 2003: 68-70.

the Socratic conception of the *nomothetes*, familiar from the *Republic*, as the ultimate authority of the total culture of the good society, *including its names*.

In the fourth section of this part of the dialogue (389a5-390e5), Socrates claims that the correctness of a name (like any product of expertise) depends on the form (and not the matter) of the name (389a5-390a10), and that it is the custom-giver's task to make a name while having the dialectician as supervisor, if he is to give names well (390d5-8). In the fourth and final section of my chapter, I try to show that, if we keep in mind the very Socratic nature of Socrates' account of natural correctness, we get strong confirmation of our interpretation of Hermogenes as an experienced Socratic philosopher. More specifically, unless we grant that Hermogenes has the character of an experienced Socratic, we cannot make sense of Socrates' account of the expertise of name-making which is supposed to support his claim that the correctness of a name (like any product of expertise) depends on the form (and not the matter) of the name. Similarly, unless we grant that Hermogenes has the character of an experienced Socratic, we cannot make sense of Socrates' account of the role of the expert user which is supposed to support his claim that the proper judge of the correctness of names is the dialectian and not the custom-giver.

## 1.1 The character and views of Hermogenes (383a1-385e3)

What kind of character is the Hermogenes of this dialogue? And what is the nature of his views? For a long time Hermogenes was mainly seen as an easily manipulated young man with an inconsistent mixture of silly and serious views,[7] or as a more independent figure with an extreme and obviously untenable theory – like Humpty-Dumpty in Lewis Caroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.[8] More recently, scholars have tried to rehabilitate Hermogenes and to present him as the voice of common sense. Rachel Barney describes Hermogenes' "conventionalism" as "a comparatively reflective way of supporting the commonsensical 'conservative' intuition that all our actual names (that is all the things socially recognized as names) are correct."[9] She further claims that this fits "his general portrayal in the *Cratylus* as responsive, ingenuous, and open-minded (in contrast to Cratylus) – something close indeed to the voice of common sense."[10] That is, according to Barney, Hermogenes is portrayed as an incipient common sense philosopher who is trying to develop a theory to support his commonsensical 'conservative' intuitions. David Sedley seems to be in broad agreement with Barney, though he stresses that "we should not go too far in calling [Hermogenes] the

[7] Grote 1865: 501; Méridier 1931: 34-36; Kretzmann 1971: 126-128; Kahn 1973: 158-159.
[8] Williams 1982: 89-90; Mackenzie 1986: 126-127; Baxter 1992: 17-21.
[9] Barney 2001: 23.
[10] Barney 2001: 40.

adherent of any theory." Rather: "Hermogenes' own role at this stage of the dialogue is to voice common sense, not theory."[11] On Sedley's interpretation, then, Hermogenes is presented as someone who offers his largely spontaneous and untheoretical opinion on the matter.

In my view, Barney and Sedley are right to try to save Hermogenes from being portrayed as intellectually weak or silly, but they are wrong to characterize him as "the voice of common sense". In this section, I aim to show, first, that Hermogenes presents himself, not as an ordinary person or as an incipient (conservative) philosopher, but as an experienced intellectual and as a Socratic, and, second, that Hermogenes' views about names should be seen, not as commonsensical (in the sense of being conservative or ordinary), but as uncommonly radical. Superficially, this could appear as a return to the traditional interpretation of Hermogenes views, but as I point out, there are very important differences between the kind of radicalism traditionally ascribed to Hermogenes and the kind of radicalism I ascribe to Hermogenes.

### 1.1.1 Hermogenes' character (383a1-384e2)

Let us begin with Hermogenes' initial description of Cratylus' position and consider what picture of Hermogenes emerges (383a4-b2):

> Κρατύλος φησὶν ὅδε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὀνόματος ὀρθότητα εἶναι ἑκάστῳ τῶν ὄντων φύσει πεφυκυῖαν, καὶ οὐ τοῦτο εἶναι ὄνομα ὃ ἄν τινες συνθέμενοι καλεῖν καλῶσι, τῆς αὑτῶν φωνῆς μόριον ἐπιφθεγγόμενοι, ἀλλὰ ὀρθότητά τινα τῶν ὀνομάτων πεφυκέναι καὶ Ἕλλησι καὶ βαρβάροις τὴν αὐτὴν ἅπασιν.[12]

> Socrates, Cratylus here claims that there is a natural correctness of name for each of the things that are, and he denies that a name is what some people might call something after having agreed to call it that, uttering a part of their own voice; rather, there is a natural correctness of names for both Greeks and barbarians, the same for all.[13]

This is hardly the voice of the ordinary person. It rather sounds like someone thoroughly familiar with a technical subject and its specialized jargon. The correctness of names was a well-known area of interest among ancient Greek intellectuals. Within the *Cratylus*, Socrates describes Prodicus (384b), Protagoras (391c), and Cratylus (428b) as teachers of the subject. In all three passages, Socrates' (ironically deferential) reference to these figures suggests that they treated the correctness of names in terms

[11] Sedley 2003: 51-52.

[12] I use the new Oxford Classical Text of the *Cratylus* (ed. E.A. Duke, et al.), unless otherwise indicated.

[13] Unless otherwise indicated, the translations of Greek are mine, although I have sometimes borrowed phrases and sentences from existing translations.

of the fundamental contrast between *physis* and *nomos*. Outside the *Cratylus*, several sources appear to confirm this picture, although no source explicitly states that Prodicus or Protagoras treated the correctness of names in terms of the contrast between *physis* and *nomos*.[14]

Hermogenes' description demonstrates both his familiarity with the subject and his good understanding of how the subject relates to the *physis-nomos* debate. First, Hermogenes places Cratylus squarely on the side of nature (Κρατύλος φησὶν [...] ὀνόματος ὀρθότητα εἶναι ἑκάστῳ τῶν ὄντων φύσει πεφυκυῖαν) and conjoins this view with a denial of the alternative emphasis on human agreement (καὶ οὐ τοῦτο εἶναι ὄνομα ὃ ἄν τινες συνθέμενοι καλεῖν καλῶσι). Second, he clarifies the issue by showing how it relates to the fundamental point of disagreement in the *physis-nomos* debate, viz. the disagreement between the advocates of *nomos* and their emphasis on the power and authority of local and contingent practices (ὃ ἄν τινες συνθέμενοι καλεῖν καλῶσι) and the proponents of *physis* who insist that, behind the appearance of varying local norms, there is a universal standard that applies to everyone (ἀλλὰ ὀρθότητά τινα τῶν ὀνομάτων πεφυκέναι καὶ Ἕλλησι καὶ βαρβάροις τὴν αὐτὴν ἅπασιν).[15]

So far the picture of Hermogenes is one of a sharp and experienced intellectual and not one of an ordinary person who has given little or no prior thought to the topic of conversation. This general picture is confirmed by the details in the passage. Hermogenes first describes Cratylus' view as a view about the correctness of names and then contrasts this view with the claim that human agreement can produce a name. This shift might be taken to indicate Hermogenes' failure to grasp the most basic distinction in the whole discussion: the distinction between being a name and being a correct name. That is, one might take Hermogenes' contrast as showing that he has failed to understand that the view that nature determines the correctness of names does not entail the view that human agreement cannot produce a name, only that human agreement cannot determine the correctness of names. What tells decisively against this interpretation, however, is that Hermogenes is giving a description of Cratylus' position, and, as we learn later in the dialogue (429b), Cratylus in fact does hold the radical view that there are only correct names. Hermogenes is therefore completely right in implying that Cratylus' views about correctness entail that human agreement cannot produce a name because that would allow for the existence of incorrect names. Thus, far from indicating an incomplete command of the subject matter, this feature of Hermogenes' description shows his full grasp of the idiosyncracy of Cratylus' position. This general understanding of the peculiarity of Cratylus' views is probably a product of the many discussions Hermogenes and Cratylus have already had about this subject (cf. 384c10-11).

[14] The evidence for Prodicus' views on language (including the correctness of names) is collected in Mayhew 2011: 17-38. A recent paper on Protagoras' views on language (including the correctness of names) is Rademaker 2013

[15] The main study of the *physis-nomos* debate remains Heinimann 1945.

There is a further feature of Hermogenes' initial description of his conversation with Cratylus that tells against viewing Hermogenes as representing the ordinary person. This feature is Hermogenes' presentation of himself as a Socratic. The first aspect of this self-portrait appears when Hermogenes, immediately after the above-quoted description, recounts his discussion with Cratylus (383b2-7):

> ἐρωτῶ οὖν αὐτὸν ἐγὼ εἰ αὐτῷ Κρατύλος τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ὄνομα· ὁ δὲ ὁμολογεῖ. "Τί δὲ Σωκράτει;" ἔφην. "Σωκράτης," ἦ δ' ὅς. "Οὐκοῦν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀνθρώποις πᾶσιν, ὅπερ καλοῦμεν ὄνομα ἕκαστον, τοῦτό ἐστιν ἑκάστῳ ὄνομα;" ὁ δέ, "Οὔκουν σοί γε," ἦ δ' ὅς, "ὄνομα Ἑρμογένης, οὐδὲ ἂν πάντες καλῶσιν ἄνθρωποι."
>
> So I ask him if his name is really "Cratylus". He says it is. "What is Socrates' name?", I asked. "'Socrates'," he said. "Does that also hold for all other people – that each person has the name that we call him?". "No, not in your case," he said, "'Hermogenes' isn't your name, not even if all people call you that."

This exchange may appear simple and straightforward, but I believe that Hermogenes is here deliberately modelling himself on Socrates. One Socratic aspect of Hermogenes' approach to the discussion with Cratylus is the choice to proceed by means of questions. As readers of Plato we may have become accustomed to think of this procedure as the standard form of argument, but Plato and Aristotle both emphasise that the use of questions – both in (more or less antagonistic) discussion[16] and (more or less cooperative) inquiry[17] – was characteristic of Socrates. A further Socratic aspect of Hermogenes' approach is the attempt to lead Cratylus from a few examples to a general conclusion. In Plato's dialogues, this device is among Socrates' most favoured forms of argument (*Cri.* 47a-d; *Grg.* 467c-e; *Hp. mi.* 373c-375d; *Resp.* 349e-350b, 352d-353c). In the *Metaphysics* (1078b27-30), Aristotle presents the same view of Socrates in more explicit terms when he describes him as having introduced the use of "inductive" arguments. Aristotle may be subsuming a variety of argumentative methods under this label, but he is no doubt mainly referring to the technical ability to lead an interlocutor from a few examples to a general conclusion.[18]

Thus, by presenting his argument in the form of questions and by trying to lead Cratylus to a general conclusion by means of a few examples, Hermogenes employs a characteristically Socratic method of argument. Further, employing a Socratic method of argument is one way – and perhaps the most effective way – of presenting oneself as

[16] *Resp.* 336b-338a (Thrasymachus describes Socrates); *Ap.* 23a-b (Socrates describes himself); Arist. *Soph. el.* 183b.

[17] *Resp.* 487a-c (Adeimantus describes Socrates); *Tht.* 148e-151d (Socrates describes himself).

[18] Cf. Ausland 2012.

a Socratic and being recognized as such. In the *Apology* (23c-d), Socrates explains that a major cause of his own unpopularity is the fact that some of his younger followers on their own initiative examine people by following Socrates' example, and that the targets of this treatment blame Socrates for this behaviour. This statement shows that, even in a public context, arguing like Socrates can be expected to lead to being closely associated with him. *A fortiori*, in the philosophical milieu of Athens, Hermogenes can expect to be recognized as (trying to be) a Socratic by employing one of the most characteristically Socratic methods of argument.

In the subsequent part of his summary of the conversation with Cratylus (383b7-384a7), Hermogenes continues to model himself on Socrates by making use of Socratic irony. The subject of Socratic irony is contested, with scholars offering very different accounts.[19] Not wishing to enter this debate here, I only note that Socratic irony includes, but is not limited to, the conversational strategy of insincerely casting oneself as someone relatively inferior and ignorant and the interlocutor (or a person referred to) as someone relatively superior and wise. Within the *Cratylus* itself, Socrates uses this strategy in his reference to Prodicus (384b-c), in his reported conversation with a group of philosophers about the name of justice (412c-413d), and in his initial conversation with Cratylus (428a-d). In the present passage, Hermogenes makes use of this conversational strategy in casting Cratylus as a kind of seer or prophet delivering an oracle and himself as someone seeking for help to divine the oracle (384a4-5: εἰ οὖν πῃ ἔχεις συμβαλεῖν τὴν Κρατύλου μαντείαν, ἡδέως ἂν ἀκούσαιμι).

Finally, having heard Socrates emphasize the difficulty of the subject and the importance of shared inquiry and open-minded discussion (384a8-c9), Hermogenes responds in true Socratic spirit by indicating his awareness that his own view might be wrong and by declaring his willingness to listen and learn not only from Cratylus, but also from anyone else (384d7-e2: εἰ δέ πῃ ἄλλῃ ἔχει, ἕτοιμος ἔγωγε καὶ μανθάνειν καὶ ἀκούειν οὐ μόνον παρὰ Κρατύλου, ἀλλὰ καὶ παρ' ἄλλου ὁτουοῦν.). In this way, Hermogenes displays his Socratic attitude to knowledge and inquiry.

### 1.1.2 Hermogenes' views (384c10-385e3)

Let us now turn our focus from Hermogenes' character to his philosophical views. At the beginning of this section, I mentioned that scholars have tended to consider Hermogenes' position on the correctness of names either as an inconsistent mixture of silly and serious views or as an extreme and obviously untenable theory. In the first case, scholars have credited Hermogenes with the serious view that language is essentially a social institution, while deploring that he holds, inconsistently, the silly view that any individual can give any name to any thing.[20] In the second case, scholars ascribe to Hermogenes an extreme theory according to which there are no incorrect

[19] Vlastos 1987; Ferrari 2008; Lane 2011; Vasiliou 2013.
[20] Grote 1865: 501; Kretzmann 1971: 126-128; Kahn 1973: 158-159.

names because, implausibly, the correct name of something just is whatever someone calls it.[21]

Scholars from each of these two groups have explicitly charged Hermogenes with subjectivist or relativist views about language. According to Norman Kretzmann, Hermogenes' failure to distinguish properly between the sphere of public language and the case of the private individual pushes him into subjectivism about language, "saddling his conventionalism with the unbearable burden of autonomous idiolects."[22] Along similar lines, Mary Margaret McCabe (publishing as M.M. MacKenzie) treats Hermogenes as a relativist about language on the grounds that he makes the correctness of all names – and of all uses of names – relative to the mind of the individual speaker, adding that this position commits Hermogenes to the view that all names – and all uses of names – are correct, and that, for this reason, "there is no distinction to be drawn between the establishment of a name and its use".[23] McCabe's idea seems to be that Hermogenes must reject the distinction between the establishment of a name and its use because accepting that there is such a thing as using an already established name would make it difficult or impossible for Hermogenes to deny that there is such a thing as using a name incorrectly, and this admission would in turn make it difficult or impossible for Hermogenes to retain his core commitment to relativism about language.

As mentioned earlier, Rachel Barney and David Sedley have tried to rehabilitate Hermogenes and to present his views, not as weak or silly, but as commonsensical, in the sense of being conservative (Barney) or ordinary (Sedley). According to Barney, Hermogenes' developed position is an attempt to justify the commonsensical *conservative* intuition that all socially recognized names are correct by claiming that the property of being a correct name of something is just the very state of having been *established* as a name of that thing. Since both individuals and societies can establish names of things, however, Hermogenes realizes that he must accept the legitimacy of *private* as well as public names. According to Barney, however, this does not make Hermogenes a subjectivist or a relativist about names. The reason is that Hermogenes recognizes the essential distinction between establishing a name and *using* a name, and while establishing a name cannot be done incorrectly (in private or in public), this is not true of name use (in private or in public) because the establishment of a name institutes a (private or public) norm for subsequent use, and name use must accord with this norm in order to be correct. Hermogenes is therefore not committed to the view that all (public or private) names and uses of names are correct, which, according to Barney, means that Hermogenes is not committed to subjectivism or relativism about naming.[24]

[21] Williams 1982: 89-90; Mackenzie 1986: 126-127; Baxter 1992: 17-21.
[22] Kretzmann 1971: 127.
[23] Mackenzie 1986: 126.
[24] Barney 2001: 23-36.

David Sedley seems to agree with Barney's defense of Hermogenes against the charges of subjectivism or relativism about naming. At the same time, Sedley stresses that Hermogenes' claims should be seen, not as a theoretical expression of conservatism, but rather as an expression of ordinary beliefs about language. What makes Hermogenes' position so interesting, according to Sedley, "is precisely the fact that his reaction to the naturalist thesis is to say what you or I might well have said if confronted with it, even if we had never thought about it before: surely names are just a human imposition on the world, and the very way we assign and use them confirms that nothing more than our own consensus determines that a given word should be applied in a given way."[25] Hermogenes' ideas about private names are equally ordinary and commonsensical: "I can make a private decision to assign the name 'horses' to human beings, and thereafter, until such time as I retract the assignment, that is *ipso facto* my own name for them, though not their public name. In this Hermogenes is stating a simple truth, familiar to anyone who has ever indulged in the use of private nick-names. It represents, as it were, the limiting case of his common-sense claim that every individual and group has the power to assign whatever names it chooses."[26]

The main aim of this subsection is to show that Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names should be seen, not as commonsensical (in the sense of being conservative or ordinary), but as uncommonly radical. Specifically, what makes Hermogenes' position radical is the notion of a name-giver who, without special privilige, has the right to give names to all things and not only to some things. I shall also indicate in what way this position could be taken as a kind of subjectivism and relativism. That is, even if it does not involve the kind of subjectivism and relativism which Kretzmann and McCabe ascribe to Hermogenes, the position does involve some kind of subjectivism and relativism.

Having described the aim of this subsection, let us consider Hermogenes' initial statement of his position (384c10-d7):

> Καὶ μὴν ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώκρατες, πολλάκις δὴ καὶ τούτῳ διαλεχθεὶς καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς, οὐ δύναμαι πεισθῆναι ὡς ἄλλη τις ὀρθότης ὀνόματος ἢ συνθήκη καὶ ὁμολογία. ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ ὅτι ἄν τίς τῳ θῆται ὄνομα, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ὀρθόν· καὶ ἂν αὖθίς γε ἕτερον μεταθῆται, ἐκεῖνο δὲ μηκέτι καλῇ, οὐδὲν ἧττον τὸ ὕστερον ὀρθῶς ἔχειν τοῦ προτέρου, ὥσπερ τοῖς οἰκέταις ἡμεῖς μετατιθέμεθα· οὐ γὰρ φύσει ἑκάστῳ πεφυκέναι ὄνομα οὐδὲν οὐδενί, ἀλλὰ νόμῳ καὶ ἔθει τῶν ἐθισάντων τε καὶ καλούντων.
>
> I'm telling you, Socrates, having had this discussion many times with him [sc. Cratylus] and many others I find myself unable to be persuaded that

[25] Sedley 2003: 51.
[26] Sedley 2003: 53; Crivelli 2008: 223.

> there is any other kind of correctness of names than agreement and consent. For I believe that whatever name one gives something, that is the correct name; and if one changes the name again to something else and no longer calls the thing by the first name, then the new name is no less correct than the old one, as for instance we change the names of our slaves. For no name belongs by nature to anything, but in virtue of the custom and habit of those making the habit and calling things by names.[27]

As an experienced intellectual and a well-trained Socratic (and thus unlike most characters in Plato), Hermogenes starts by stating his position in terms of a general definition: Agreement and consent are necessary and sufficient conditions for the correctness of a name (οὐ δύναμαι πεισθῆναι ὡς ἄλλη τις ὀρθότης ὀνόματος ἢ συνθήκη καὶ ὁμολογία). In other words, agreement and consent make a name correct, and a correct name is a product of agreement and consent. This position excludes both the middle-ground position that agreement and consent are sufficient but not necessary conditions for the correctness of a name and the opposite position (endorsed by Cratylus) that agreement and consent are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for the correctness of a name.

Having presented his general position, Hermogenes states his belief that whatever name one gives to something, that name is correct (ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ ὅτι ἄν τίς τῳ θῆται ὄνομα, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ὀρθόν), and that if one changes the name to something else the new name is just as correct as the old one was (καὶ ἂν αὖθίς γε ἕτερον μεταθῆται, ἐκεῖνο δὲ μηκέτι καλῇ, οὐδὲν ἧττον τὸ ὕστερον ὀρθῶς ἔχειν τοῦ προτέρου). What is the relation between this belief and Hermogenes general position? One possible interpretation is to take the belief as *exemplifying* the general position. According to this view, Hermogenes states the belief in order to illustrate his general position, not in order to justify it.[28] Another possible interpretation (which I prefer) is to take the belief as *justifying* the general position. That is, the two statements serve as reasons for Hermogenes' general position by providing observations that are only compatible with the general position. Thus, the idea behind the first statement seems to be that the only view that can account for the observation that any name, once established, can count as a correct name of anything is the view that correctness depends on agreement and consent because the opposite view that correctness depends on nature must put some limits on what name can count as a correct name of something. Similarly, the thought behind the second statement appears to be that the only view able to account

[27] With this translation of τῶν ἐθισάντων τε καὶ καλούντων, I take it that Hermogenes is referring to one single group who (as a group) started using certain names and continue to do so (even if not all members were part of the group when they started using the names). Also, I take it that the implied object of ἐθισάντων is ἔθος (supplied from ἔθει). Cf. *Leg.* 706d1-2: ἔθη γὰρ πονηρὰ οὐδέποτε ἐθίζειν δεῖ, καὶ ταῦτα τὸ τῶν πολιτῶν βέλτιστον μέρος. Related examples (without ἔθος as object) include *Resp.* 469b8-c1; Isae., 11, 32.; Arist., *Pol.* 1269A14-17. *Pace* Ademollo 2011: 41-2.

[28] Ademollo 2011: 39.

for the observation that a new name can be introduced and be as correct as the old name was (and no longer is) is the view that correctness depends on agreement and consent because the opposite view that correctness depends on nature must posit that the correct name of something remains the correct name of that thing (as long as the thing remains the same).

In the final sentence of the passage, Hermogenes states the further belief that there are no natural names, and that things have names because of people's custom and habit (οὐ γὰρ φύσει ἑκάστῳ πεφυκέναι ὄνομα οὐδὲν οὐδενί, ἀλλὰ νόμῳ καὶ ἔθει τῶν ἐθισάντων τε καὶ καλούντων). Hermogenes presents this belief as a reason, but it is not clear what it is a reason *for*. It could be a further reason for Hermogenes' general position that agreement and consent (and not nature) are necessary and sufficient conditions for the correctness of names. In that case, the argument would seem to be that there is no natural correctness of names because there are no natural names (since the notion of a natural correctness of names requires that there are natural names). Therefore, names can only be correct by agreement and consent.

A second possibility is that the statement is a reason for the two immediately preceding claims that whatever name one gives to something, that name is correct, and that if one changes the name to something else the new name is just as correct as the old one was. In that case the idea would seem to be that the only possible account of these two observations – the only fact that can explain that these things are possible – is that there are no natural names. If things had natural names, it would not be the case that whatever name one gives to something, that name is correct, and that if one changes the name to something else, the new name is just as correct as the old one was.

A third possibility (which I favour) is that the statement serves as a reason for the position as a whole – both the central claim and the two claims that serve as reasons for it. The view that there are no natural names is presented as the ultimate reason for the position that agreement (and not nature) is a necessary and sufficient condition for the correctness of names because (this view is the only possible explanation for the fact that) whatever name one gives to something, that name is correct, and if one changes the name to something else the new name is just as correct as the old one was.[29]

Having stated that names do not belong to things in virtue of nature, Hermogenes continues by saying that names belong to things in virtue of people's custom and habit (νόμῳ καὶ ἔθει τῶν ἐθισάντων τε καὶ καλούντων). How should we interpret the relation between agreement and consent, on the one hand, and custom and habit, on the

[29] In any case, although Hermogenes' three claims ([1] οὐ δύναμαι…καὶ ὁμολογία; [2] ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ…ἡμεῖς μετατιθέμεθα; [3] οὐ γὰρ φύσει…τε καὶ καλούντων) constitute "a consistent unity", they are not "substantially equivalent to each other". Also, while it is true that Hermogenes talks about correctness in his first two claims and then, in his third claim, "only talks about the way that a name belongs to its referent", this should not be taken to indicate that Hermogenes assumes "that 'being a correct name of X' is tantamount to 'being a name of X'." *Pace* Ademollo 2011: 41

other? One possibility is to take Hermogenes as using all four names as names for the same thing. Since custom and habit seem much closer to the notion of convention than agreement and consent, this interpretation would give some support to the common scholarly view that Hermogenes' position on the correctness of names is a kind of conventionalism.[30] Another possibility is to take Hermogenes to be using the four names for different things. More specifically, one might take agreement and consent as two names for the same thing and custom and habit as two names for a different thing. Since agreement and consent seem importantly different from convention[31] and since only agreement and consent are directly linked to correctness in Hermogenes' account, this interpretation would provide good reason to avoid using the label "conventionalism" to describe Hermogenes' position on the correctness of names. Let me present three reasons for adopting the second interpretation.

First, Socrates is aware that agreement and habit might be significantly different from each other (cf. 434e-435b). This fact and the fact that Socrates does not question Hermogenes' use of the terms in the present passage should lead us to assume that Socrates takes Hermogenes to be using these names for different things, especially since Hermogenes has discussed the correctness of names on many previous occasions and therefore is likely to use these key terms with care and precision. Second, we can make better sense of Hermogenes' position by taking him to be using the four names for two different things rather than by taking him to be using all four names for the same thing. Hermogenes' initial claim is that agreement and consent are necessary and sufficient conditions for the correctness of a name, and his final claim is that names belong to things in virtue of custom and habit. If we take Hermogenes to be using all four names for the same thing, we have to charge Hermogenes' account, not just with imprecision, but also with incoherence. For example, the claim that agreement and consent determines the correctness of a name entails that one can settle the question about the correctness of some name by reference to the act of agreement or consent which accompanied the giving of the name. However, if Hermogenes uses all four names for the same thing, then Hermogenes (implicitly) claims that custom and habit determine the correctness of a name. But this claim seems to entail that no act of agreement or consent accompanied the giving of the name, or at least that such an act (if it ever took place) is irrelevant to the correctness of the name. Now, these problems disappear if we take agreement and consent as two names for one thing and custom and habit as two names for a different thing. According to this interpretation, Hermogenes claims that there is one thing *determining* the correctness of names, namely agreement and consent, and another thing *causing* names to belong to things, namely custom and habit. That is, an act of agreement or consent accompanies the original giving of the name; this act of agreement or consent determines the correctness of the name and continues to do so when the name has become part of the custom and habit of the

[30] Kretzmann 1971: 126; Barney 2001: 1; Sedley 2003: 51; Ademollo 2011: 37-42.
[31] On the important differences between convention and agreement, cf. Lewis 1969: 83-88.

people using the name. However, when the name has become part of people's custom and habit, the original act of agreement or consent is no longer what causes the name to belong to the thing. Rather, custom and habit secures the link between name and thing by preserving and transmitting the practice of treating the name as belonging to the thing. The passage contains further evidence to support this interpretation. Hermogenes uses two observations to justify his general definition of the correctness of names. The first observation concerns giving a name to a thing, and the second observation concerns changing the name of a thing. This emphasis on the original act of giving or changing a name (rather than on the established use of a name) strongly indicates that Hermogenes consciously distinguishes between agreement and consent, on the one hand, and custom and habit, on the other, and that he solely ascribes the correctness of names to the original act of agreement and consent (and not to custom and habit).

Given these considerations, we should adopt the second interpretation and take Hermogenes to be using agreement and consent as names for one thing and custom and habit as names for a different thing. Also, we should avoid using the label "conventionalism" to describe Hermogenes' position on the correctness of names on the grounds that agreement and consent seem importantly different from convention. In the previous subsection, I claimed that Hermogenes demonstrated a good grasp of the debate about the correctness of names by relating this relatively narrow discussion to the broader discussion about *physis* and *nomos*. This was only roughly correct, as we can now see. In fact, Hermogenes related the discussion about the correctness of names to a special version of this broader discussion in which the contrast is not between *physis* and *nomos* but between *physis* and *syntheke* (and *homologia*).

According to our interpretation of Hermogenes' position on the correctness of names, then, the act of giving a name to something (or changing the name of something) is accompanied by an act of agreement or consent which determines, and continues to determine, the correctness of the name. However, Hermogenes' statement of this position is open to very different interpretations, depending on how one construes the pronouns in Hermogenes' statement: ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ ὅτι ἄν **τίς τῳ** θῆται ὄνομα, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ὀρθόν. These pronouns stand for the subject giving the name (what we might call "the name-giver") and the thing being named. Either pronoun can be construed as a restricted or unresctricted variable. That is, the pronoun standing for the name-giver can be understood as equivalent to "someone" or "anyone" (or "something" or "anything"). Similarly, the pronoun standing for the thing being named can be understood as equivalent to "something" or "anything" (or "someone" or "anyone"). Clearly, the different construals and their different possible combinations lead to very different interpretations of Hermogenes' position. If we take as our starting-point the name-giver, we can distinguish between two general types of interpretation.

The first type of interpretation construes the pronoun standing for the name-giver as a restricted variable and thereby ascribes to Hermogenes a notion of a priviliged name-giver. We can distinguish between two different versions of this interpretation.

The first version construes the pronoun standing for the thing being named as a restricted variable and thereby ascribes to Hermogenes the notion of a name-giver who has the privilige to give names to some things but not to all things. The second version construes the pronoun standing for the thing being named as an unrestricted variable and thereby ascribes to Hermogenes the notion of a name-giver who has the privilige to give names to all things and not only to some things.

The second type of interpretation construes the pronoun standing for the name-giver as an unrestricted variable and thereby ascribes to Hermogenes a notion of a name-giver who, without special privilige, gives names to things. We can distinguish between two different versions of this interpretation. The first version construes the pronoun standing for the thing being named as a restricted variable and thereby ascribes to Hermogenes the notion of a name-giver who, without special privilige, has the right to give names to some things but not to all things. The second version construes the pronoun standing for the thing being named as an unrestricted variable and thereby ascribes to Hermogenes the notion of a name-giver who, without special privilige, has the right to give names to all things and not only to some things.

These two types of interpretation (and the two versions of each type) ascribe very different positions to Hermogenes. If we consider Hermogenes' reference to the slave-owner changing the names of his slaves, the second version of the first type of interpretation seems correct, since the slave-owner is naturally taken to have a special privilige to give names to some things (e.g. his own slaves) but not to all things (e.g. his neighbour's slaves).

In fact, however, Hermogenes' position on the correctness of names is much more radical, as becomes clear in Socrates' subsequent questioning (385a1-e3):

> ΣΩ. Ἴσως μέντοι τὶ λέγεις, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες· σκεψώμεθα δέ. ὃ ἂν, φῄς, καλῇ τις ἕκαστον,[32] τοῦθ' ἑκάστῳ ὄνομα;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ.
>
> ΣΩ. Καὶ ἐὰν ἰδιώτης καλῇ καὶ ἐὰν πόλις;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Φημί.
>
> ΣΩ. Τί οὖν; ἐὰν ἐγὼ καλῶ ὁτιοῦν τῶν ὄντων, οἷον ὃ νῦν καλοῦμεν ἄνθρωπον, ἐὰν ἐγὼ τοῦτο ἵππον προσαγορεύω, ὃ δὲ νῦν ἵππον, ἄνθρωπον, ἔσται δημοσίᾳ μὲν ὄνομα ἄνθρωπος τῷ αὐτῷ, ἰδίᾳ δὲ ἵππος; καὶ ἰδίᾳ μὲν αὖ ἄνθρωπος, δημοσίᾳ δὲ ἵππος; οὕτω λέγεις;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ.[33]

[32] Some scholars prefer the alternative manuscript reading: ὃ ἂν θῇ καλεῖν τις ἕκαστον. The choice makes no real difference to interpretation, but I prefer the printed reading because it accords well with the Platonic idiom (for the same use of φῄς in very similar contexts, cf. *Tht.* 151c; *Men.* 83a; *Leg.* 710c), and because the manuscripts tend to "normalize" this use of φῄς (cf. *Soph.* 240b; *Resp.* 420b).

[33] I follow the editors of the new OCT in regarding 385b2-d1 (ΣΩ. Φέρε δή…πῶς γὰρ οὔ;) as not belonging anywhere in (the present version of) the dialogue. For the same view, cf. Sedley 2003: 6-14. The case for regarding the present location of the passage as inappropriate (and for inserting

ΣΩ. Ὃ ἂν ἄρα ἕκαστος φῇ τῳ ὄνομα εἶναι, τοῦτό ἐστιν ἑκάστῳ ὄνομα;

ΕΡΜ. Ναί.

ΣΩ. Ἦ καὶ ὁπόσα ἂν φῇ τις ἑκάστῳ ὀνόματα εἶναι, τοσαῦτα ἔσται καὶ τότε ὁπόταν φῇ;

ΕΡΜ. Οὐ γὰρ ἔχω ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὀνόματος ἄλλην ὀρθότητα ἢ ταύτην, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἕτερον εἶναι καλεῖν ἑκάστῳ ὄνομα, ὃ ἐγὼ ἐθέμην, σοὶ δὲ ἕτερον, ὃ αὖ σύ. οὕτω δὲ καὶ ταῖς πόλεσιν ὁρῶ ἰδίᾳ ἑκάσταις ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς κείμενα ὀνόματα, καὶ Ἕλλησι παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους Ἕλληνας, καὶ Ἕλλησι παρὰ βαρβάρους.

Soc. Perhaps you have a point, Hermogenes. Let's have a look. What one calls any given thing, that is, according to you, the name of that thing?

Her. That's what I think.

Soc. Both in the case of an individual person calling it something and in the case of a city doing so?

Her. That's what I'm saying.

Soc. Well, what if I call any of the things that are – for instance what we now call "human" – if I call that "horse", and if I call "human" what we now call "horse", will the same thing have the name "human" publicly and "horse" individually? Is that what you mean?

Soc. That's what I think.

Soc. So what any given person says is the name of something, that is the name of that thing?

Soc. Yes.

Soc. Does any given thing also have as many names as one says it has, and does it have them at the time that one says it does?

Her. Yes, Socrates, I cannot conceive of any other correctness of names than this: that it is for me to call any given thing a different name which I have given it, and that it is for you to call it another name which you have given it. This is also what I see in the different cities – they have each individually given names to things, both in the case of Greeks compared to other Greeks and in the case of Greeks compared to barbarians.

Some scholars have seen Socrates in this passage as pushing Hermogenes into a more extreme position than his initial position.[34] However, as I shall try to bring out, Socrates only attempts to clarify and restate Hermogenes' initial position.

First, Socrates clarifies the intended construal of the pronoun standing for the thing being named in Hermogenes' initial claim (ὅτι ἄν τίς **τῳ** θῆται ὄνομα, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ

the passage between lines 387c5-6) was first made by Schofield 1972. Arguments for keeping the transmitted text are given by Ademollo 2011: 49-72.

[34] E.g. Goldschmidt 1940: 46; Kretzmann 1971: 127

ὀρθόν) by asking Hermogenes to confirm that what one calls *any given thing*, that is (according to Hermogenes) the name of *that thing* (ὃ ἄν, φῄς, καλῇ τις **ἕκαστον**, τοῦθ' **ἑκάστῳ** ὄνομα;).[35] Thus, Socrates has Hermogenes clarify that the pronoun should be be construed as an unrestricted variable. That is, Hermogenes confirms that, according to his initial claim, the name-giver (whose identity is yet to be specified) has the right to give names to all things and not only to some things.

Second, Socrates seeks to determine the intended construal of the pronoun standing for the name-giver in Hermogenes' initial claim (ὅτι ἄν **τίς** τῳ θῆται ὄνομα, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ὀρθόν) by asking Hermogenes to confirm that the name-giver can be both an individual person and a city (Καὶ ἐὰν ἰδιώτης καλῇ καὶ ἐὰν πόλις;). In this case, the Greek word ἰδιώτης is used to mark the contrast between city and individual citizen. In other contexts, the word is used to mark the contrast between an ordinary citizen and a politically active citizen (e.g. ὁ πολιτευόμενος, ὁ ῥήτωρ) or the contrast between the layman and the expert (e.g. ὁ ἰατρός, ὁ δημιουργός). In all these cases, the word is used to describe the generic, unexceptional individual. For this reason, Hermogenes seems to confirm that the name-giver in his initial claim is a name-giver who, without special privilige, gives names to things. In other words, Hermogenes seems to confirm that *anyone* has the right to give names to things.

Third, Socrates attempts to confirm this impression and to clarify what the notion of an unpriviliged name-giver involves by asking Hermogenes to confirm that Socrates himself, for instance, has the right to change the name of anything and to call "horse" what the city calls "human" and *vice versa*, thereby making the same thing have the name "horse" for the individual Socrates and the name "human" for the Athenian public (ΣΩ. Τί οὖν; ἐὰν ἐγὼ καλῶ ὁτιοῦν τῶν ὄντων, οἷον ὃ νῦν καλοῦμεν ἄνθρωπον, ἐὰν ἐγὼ τοῦτο ἵππον προσαγορεύω, ὃ δὲ νῦν ἵππον, ἄνθρωπον, ἔσται δημοσίᾳ μὲν ὄνομα ἄνθρωπος τῷ αὐτῷ, ἰδίᾳ δὲ ἵππος; καὶ ἰδίᾳ μὲν αὖ ἄνθρωπος, δημοσίᾳ δὲ ἵππος; οὕτω λέγεις;).

Fourth, in the light of these points of clarification, Socrates restates Hermogenes' initial claim in a more explicit and unambiguous form by asking Hermogenes to confirm that whatever any given person says is the name of any given thing, that is the name of that thing (Ὃ ἄν ἄρα ἕκαστος φῇ τῳ ὄνομα εἶναι, τοῦτό ἐστιν ἑκάστῳ ὄνομα;).

Fifth, Socrates seeks to determine Hermogenes' position on the role of plural names and the aspect of time by asking Hermogenes to confirm that however many names one says are the names of any given thing, those are the names of that thing at the time when one says so (Ἦ καὶ ὁπόσα ἂν φῇ τις ἑκάστῳ ὀνόματα εἶναι, τοσαῦτα ἔσται καὶ τότε ὁπόταν φῇ;). Hermogenes' initial claims did not articulate the role of plural names or the aspect of time, but the use of the singular relative pronoun (**ὅτι** ἄν τίς τῳ θῆται ὄνομα, τοῦτο εἶναι τὸ ὀρθόν) and the juxtaposition of the cases of giving a name and changing it to something else could give the impression that Hermogenes'

[35] The use of "καλεῖν" and "φάναι τί τῳ ὄνομα εἶναι" in this passage should be taken as equivalent to ὄνομα τίθεσθαι.

claim should be taken to mean that whatever **single** name one gives something, that is the correct name; but if one tries to give the thing a further name, one has thereby changed the original name of that thing into some other name. However, by accepting Socrates' suggestion Hermogenes has made it clear that one can give several names to one thing at the same time.

Finally, Hermogenes confirms Socrates' interpretation of his initial statement as containing a commitment to the notion of a name-giver who, without special privilige, has the right to give names to all things and not only to some things. More precisely, Hermogenes expresses the view that any person is allowed to call any given thing a different name which this person has given to this thing (Οὐ γὰρ ἔχω ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὀνόματος ἄλλην ὀρθότητα ἢ ταύτην, ἐμοὶ μὲν ἕτερον εἶναι καλεῖν ἑκάστῳ ὄνομα, ὃ ἐγὼ ἐθέμην, σοὶ δὲ ἕτερον, ὃ αὖ σύ). Interestingly, Hermogenes compares the case of individual persons to the case of cities, saying that he can observe that particular cities have given names to the same things in their own individual way (οὕτω δὲ καὶ ταῖς πόλεσιν ὁρῶ ἰδίᾳ ἑκάσταις ἐπὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς κείμενα ὀνόματα, καὶ Ἕλλησι παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους Ἕλληνας, καὶ Ἕλλησι παρὰ βαρβάρους). What Hermogenes implies, it seems, is that his claim about individual persons is somehow supported by this observation about cities.

In sum, according to Hermogenes' version of the view that agreement and consent determines the correctness of names, any person is allowed to call any given thing a different name which this person has given to this thing. That is, as we can now see, the second version of the second interpretation was correct: Hermogenes does have the notion of a name-giver who, without special privilige, has the right to give names to all things and not only to some things. Is this a radical or a non-radical view? In favour of the non-radical interpretation of Hermogenes' view one might point to the *limited range* of individual agreement and consent as a source of correctness. If Socrates gives the name "horse" to what people in general call "human", the name "horse" will be the correct name for Socrates as an individual (ἰδίᾳ), but the name "human" (and not "horse") remains the correct name for the Athenian public (δημοσίᾳ) (cf. 385a6-b1). Also, Hermogenes is allowed to call any given thing a different name which he himself has given to this thing, but so is Socrates and any other person (cf. 385d7-9). That is, Hermogenes only has the right to determine what names are correct for himself and not for anyone else. This may seem like a non-radical view. As David Sedley puts it:

> I can make a private decision to assign the name 'horses' to human beings, and thereafter, until such time as I retract the assignment, that is *ipso facto* my own name for them, though not their public name. In this Hermogenes is stating a simple truth, familiar to anyone who has ever indulged in the use of private nick-names. It represents, as it were, the limiting case of his common-sense claim that every individual and group has the power to

assign whatever names it chooses.[36]

Upon reflection, however, we can see that Hermogenes' view is clearly a radical rather than a non-radical view. Consider, first, a relatively innocent example. According to tradition, Socrates and Xanthippe had three sons: Lamprocles, Sophroniscus, and Menexenus. Now, imagine that Socrates' neighbour for some reason has given his own names to Socrates' sons. Every time the neighbour talks to Socrates or to someone else about Socrates' sons, he calls them by the names he himself has given them. If the interlocutor looks puzzled, the neighbour is always quick to add that he is not implying that Socrates and Xanthippe were wrong to name their sons "Lamprocles", "Sophroniscus", and "Menexenus". Only he has decided to call them different names. According to Hermogenes' view about the correctness of names, the neighbour is allowed to do this, and there is nothing wrong about his behaviour. This may be true, but I believe it is fairly clear that a view which licenses this kind of behaviour appears radical rather than non-radical.

Consider, second, the less innocent case of pejoratives. In contemporary Western communities, the public regards certain names, for instance German "Boche" or English "kike", as incorrect names of putative members of certain groups (Germans and Jews). Now, imagine that a member of this community for some reason has decided to call Germans "the Boche" or Jews "kikes". Every time this person talks to another member of the community about Germans or Jews, he calls them by the names by which he himself has decided to call them. If the interlocutor frowns, the person is always quick to add that he is not implying that Germans are cruel, or that Jews are bad people. Only he has decided to call them those names. According to Hermogenes' view about the correctness of names, this person is allowed to do this, and there is nothing wrong about his behaviour. This seems clearly wrong, and I believe it is obvious that a view which licenses this kind of behaviour is radical rather than non-radical.

Having established that Hermogenes' view about the correctness of names is radical rather than non-radical, let us consider whether Hermogenes' view is subjectivist and/or relativist. It seems clear that Hermogenes' view about the correctness of names is neither subjectivist nor relativist if subjectivism and/or relativism about the correctness of names is tantamount to the view that there is no such things as using names incorrectly. If one uses a name in a way which does not accord with one's own agreement and consent or with one's community's agreement and consent, then, according to Hermogenes' view, one is using the name incorrectly. However, if we take subjectivism about the correctness of names to be tantamount to the view that the source and criterion of correctness of any agreement ("what makes some agreement correct") is the fact that some subject has made the agreement (and not some objective state of affairs), then Hermogenes' view about the correctness of names is subjectivist. Also, if we take relativism about the correctness of names to be tantamount to the view

[36] Sedley 2003: 53.

that the correctness of a name is not absolute but rather relative to some agreement made by someone (whether an individual or a city), then Hermogenes' view about the correctness of names is relativist.

## 1.2 The nature of things and actions (385e4-387d9)

Having clarified and restated Hermogenes' initial position, Socrates confronts Hermogenes with the metaphysical views of Protagoras and Euthydemus and makes him agree that, since those views are wrong, things must have their own stable being (385e4-386e5). Socrates and Hermogenes further agree that actions have their own nature and that, as a consequence, the act of naming must be performed in the way in which it is natural to name things and for things to be named, and with the thing with which it is natural to name things (386e6-387d9).

What is the strategy behind Socrates' claims that things and actions have their own nature, and that naming (being an action) has it own nature? And what is the relation between these claims and Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names? Scholars agree that Socrates' aim in this passage is to *convince* Hermogenes, first, that Socrates' two claims are true, and, second, that since naming has its own nature, Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names must be false. Given this general consensus, the debate among scholars has been about determining *the specific way in which* Socrates seeks to achieve these goals. We can distinguish here between two types of interpretations.

The first type of interpretation takes Socrates to be arguing along the following lines: Since Protagoras' and Euthydemus' views are wrong, everything has its own nature. Since everything has its own nature, actions (being a kind of thing) have their own nature. Since actions have their own nature, naming (being a kind of action) has its own nature. Since naming has its own nature, Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names are false.[37]

The second type of interpretation takes Socrates to be arguing along the following lines: Since Protagoras' and Euthydemus' views are wrong, (some, most, or all) things have their own nature. Since (some, most, or all) things have their own nature, all actions focused on those things have their own nature. Since naming is an action focused on (at least some) things that have their own nature, naming has its own nature. Since naming has its own nature, Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names are false.[38]

David Sedley, representing the second type of interpretation, points to the serious problem for the first type of interpretation that it attributes a clearly unsatisfactory

[37] This type of interpretation is fully and clearly set out by Ademollo 2011: 76-88; 95-106.
[38] Sedley 2003: 54-58.

argument to Socrates.[39] Building on Sedley's remarks, we may formulate the following objection to the first type of interpretation. From the refutation of Protagoras and Euthydemus it only follows that *some* things have their own nature, not that everything has its own nature. And from the claim that some things have their own nature, it does not follow that actions (being a kind of thing) have their own nature. Actions may or may not be among the things that have their own nature. Further, even if some actions (e.g. cutting and burning) have their own nature, naming is perhaps not one of them. The objection, in short, is that the first type of interpretation violates the principle of charity by attributing to Socrates an evidently flawed argument.

Sedley's interpretation also faces some serious problems, however. First, Sedley takes Socrates to claim that *some, most, or all* things have their own nature, even though Socrates clearly claims that things in general have their own nature (cf. 386d8-e4). Second, Sedley takes Socrates to argue that actions have their own nature *by being focused on* things that have their own nature, even though Socrates quite clearly claims that actions have their own nature because actions are one kind of things that are (cf. 386e6-8). The objection, in short, is that the second type of interpretation violates the principle of fidelity by attributing to Socrates an argument which clearly goes against his claims in the passage.

It may seem, then, that interpreters of this passage are caught between a rock and a hard place: between treating Socrates' claims uncharitably or unfaithfully. How can we, if possible, avoid making this choice? My own view, in brief, is that we must give up two basic assumptions shared by all scholars. First, we must give up the assumption that Socrates' arguments about the nature of things (385e4-386e5) and about the nature of actions (386e6-387d9) constitute the crucial point at which Socrates (apparently) shows that Hermogenes' position cannot be right, and that there must be a natural correctness of names. Rather, these arguments (385e4-387d9) merely *prepare* the ground for the decisive arguments which come towards the end of the first part of the dialogue (388c3-390e5). Second, we must give up the assumption that Socrates puts forward his arguments about the nature of things (385e4-386e5) and about the nature of actions (386e6-387d9) in order to convince Hermogenes of anything. Rather, these arguments are merely meant to *remind* Hermogenes of views he already shares. That is, the solution I propose contains two elements. First, accepting that Socrates' argument about the nature of things is invalid, and that Socrates' argument about the nature of actions is insufficiently specific to provide decisive support in favour of the account of natural correctness. Second, explaining these features *by reinterpreting the strategy behind these arguments.* As I shall try to show, Socrates' strategy is specifically designed to deal with a *Socratic* philosopher such as Hermogenes.

[39] Sedley 2003: 56.

### 1.2.1 The nature of things (385e4-386e5)

Let us begin with Socrates' transitional question about Protagoras' human measure doctrine (385e4-386a7):

> ΣΩ. Φέρε δὴ ἴδωμεν, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, πότερον καὶ τὰ ὄντα οὕτως ἔχειν σοι φαίνεται, ἰδίᾳ αὐτῶν ἡ οὐσία εἶναι ἑκάστῳ, ὥσπερ Πρωταγόρας ἔλεγεν λέγων "πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον" εἶναι ἄνθρωπον, ὡς ἄρα οἷα μὲν ἂν ἐμοὶ φαίνηται τὰ πράγματα εἶναι, τοιαῦτα μὲν ἔστιν ἐμοί, οἷα δ' ἂν σοί, τοιαῦτα δὲ σοί· ἢ ἔχειν δοκεῖ σοι αὐτὰ αὑτῶν τινα βεβαιότητα τῆς οὐσίας;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἤδη ποτὲ ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀπορῶν καὶ ἐνταῦθα ἐξηνέχθην εἰς ἅπερ Πρωταγόρας λέγει· οὐ πάνυ τι μέντοι μοι δοκεῖ οὕτως ἔχειν.

> Soc. Come on then, Hermogenes, let's see if you think this is also the case for the things that are – that their being is for each person individually, just as Protagoras said with the words "man is the measure of all things": that the way things appear to me to be, is how they are for me, and the way things appear to you to be, is how they are for you. Or do you think they have their own "firmness" of being?
>
> Her. At times I have been confused, Socrates, and have also in this case been carried away to what Protagoras says. But I really don't believe that's right.

There are some interesting similarities and differences between this passage and the beginning of the philosophical discussion in the *Theaetetus* (151d7-152b5). In both cases, Socrates connects the view of his interlocutor to Protagoras' human measure doctrine. And in both cases, the interlocutor confesses familiarity with Protagoras' *Truth*.

Beyond these general similarities, however, there are some important differences. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates *identifies* Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as perception with Protagoras' human measure doctrine (151e8-152a4).[40] In the *Cratylus*, Socrates sees Hermogenes' view about names as Protagorean *in spirit* and inquires whether Hermogenes also subscribes to Protagoras' human measure doctrine (Φέρε δὴ ἴδωμεν, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, πότερον **καὶ τὰ ὄντα** οὕτως ἔχειν σοι φαίνεται […]). Hermogenes confirms Socrates' impression when he replies that *also in this case* (i.e. in the case of metaphysics) has he been carried away to what Protagoras says (Ἤδη ποτὲ ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀπορῶν **καὶ ἐνταῦθα** ἐξηνέχθην εἰς ἅπερ Πρωταγόρας λέγει). Previous scholars seem to have overlooked that Hermogenes' answer to Socrates' question about things implies that his view about names is Protagorean in some sense. The reason why scholars have overlooked this implication is that they have understood

[40] For discussion of the exact relation between Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as perception and Protagoras' human measure doctrine, cf. Burnyeat 1990: 7-65.

καὶ ἐνταῦθα as anticipating εἰς ἅπερ Πρωταγόρας λέγει.[41] However, we should prefer my interpretation for the simple reason that having καὶ ἐνταῦθα anticipate εἰς ἅπερ Πρωταγόρας λέγει is not a natural (or even possible) construal of the Greek.[42] Also, καὶ ἐνταῦθα is normally used in this kind of context to talk about abstract places or theoretical scenarios (cf. 431b).

We may wonder to what extent Hermogenes' view overlaps with the historical Protagoras' view about the correctness of names, and to what extent Hermogenes has come to his own view by consciously borrowing a Protagorean view or by developing basic Protagorean ideas such as the human measure doctrine. In my view, the most likely answer is that Hermogenes' view is Protagorean *in spirit*, but not necessarily in detail, and that Hermogenes has come to his own view through reflection and discussion, not by consciously borrowing a Protagorean view or by developing basic Protagorean ideas.

Also, we may wonder how it is possible to be a Socratic like Hermogenes and (to be led occasionally) to entertain Protagorean views? Here we should distinguish between having a Protagorean view about names and holding Protagoras' human measure doctrine. Surely, part of the reason why Hermogenes as a Socratic holds broadly Protagorean views about the correctness of names in the dialogue is that before the present conversation Socrates has not demonstrated the Socratic position on the subject. Contrast the subject of virtue or the subject of reality. In those areas, any Socratic would know the outline of the Socratic position: that virtue is knowledge, or that reality is intelligible rather than perceptible. This does not mean that it is not clear what the Socratic position should be on the subject of the correctness of names. It only means that this position has not been worked out before the conversation between Socrates and Hermogenes in the *Cratylus*.

What about Hermogenes' report about being "carried away" to Protagorean views about the nature of things? How do we explain that a Socratic philosopher on occasion has been led to hold views diametrically opposed to the well-known Socratic

[41] Some scholars make this explicit in their translations: e.g. Ademollo 2011: 80: "Sometime, Socrates, I've been driven by puzzlement to this very point, i.e. to the very things which Protagoras says." C. Dalimier's translation: "Dans mon embarras, Socrate, je me suis parfois laissé aller à la position même de Protagoras : pourtant je ne crois pas tout à fait qu'il en soit ainsi." F. Aronadio's translation: "Già una volta io stesso, Socrate, trovandomi in difficoltà, fui trascinato proprio verso ciò che afferma Protagora: ma non mi appare affatto che le cose stiano così." H.N. Fowler's translation: "It has sometimes happened to me, Socrates, to be so perplexed that I have been carried away even into this doctrine of Protagoras." Other scholars leave out καὶ ἐνταῦθα in their translations: e.g. C.D.C. Reeve's translation: "There have been times, Socrates, when I have been so puzzled that I've been driven to take refuge in Protagoras' doctrine." L. Méridier's translation: "Il m'est déjà arrivé, Socrate, de me laisser entraîner dans mon embarras à la thèse de Protagoras. Et pourtant, ce n'est pas précisément mon opinion." Méridier adds the note: "Ενταῦθα est expliqué par εἰς ἅπερ – λέγει."

[42] Normally, ἐνταῦθα is anticipated by ἔνθα (or ἔνθεν): Soph. *El.* 378-382; Hdt. 2.30.4, 2.56.2; Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.7, 7.4.3; *Mem.* 4.3.8; *An.* 5.7.6. (ἔνθεν), 7.6.14; *Cyr.* 5.4.21. Rarely, ἐνταῦθα is anticipated by ὅποι: Hippoc., *De Flatibus* 10, 8-9; Ael. Ar. *Orat.* 29.373, 34-37.

position that things have a nature of their own? In order to answer this question, we need to consider that, in Plato's dialogues, being a Socratic is always presented as a struggle. Remaining true to Socrates and Socratic values is far from easy. Take the case of Glaucon and Adeimantus in the *Republic*. The two brothers do not really think that injustice is better than justice, but they are finding it difficult to stick to this belief because Thrasymachus and many others constantly expose them to the view that injustice is better than justice (cf. 358c-d). The reason for the brothers' susceptibility to this kind of influence is their inability to explain what it is about justice and injustice that makes justice better than injustice (cf. 366d-367e). This inability to defend Socratic values (e.g. the intrinsic goodness of justice) is, I believe, the general source of problems for the Socratics in Plato's dialogues. Like Glaucon and Adeimantus in the *Republic*, Hermogenes does not really believe that man is the measure of all things, but on occasion he has been confused and has – probably without realizing it at first – been led to this very conclusion. Having the belief that things in general have a certain "firmness" of being while at the same time feeling the pressure of Protagoras' human measure doctrine is thus an important part of the characterization of Hermogenes as a Socratic.

This brings us to the second important difference between the present passage and the beginning of the philosophical discussion in the *Theaetetus* (151d7-152b5). In the *Theaetetus*, Theaetetus does not distance himself from the view that perception is knowledge when Socrates identifies this view with Protagoras' human measure doctrine. In the *Cratylus*, however, Socrates only needs to suggest a general resemblance between Hermogenes' view about names and Protagoras' human measure doctrine for Hermogenes to disavow Protagoras' human measure doctrine. This difference has implications for the subsequent treatment of Protagoras' human measure doctrine in the two dialogues. In the *Theaetetus*, the interlocutors set about uncovering the underpinnings of the human measure doctrine (152c-160e) and then start looking for arguments that will convince Theaetetus (and even Protagoras himself) that the human measure doctrine is false (160e-183c). In the *Cratylus*, Socrates simply reminds Hermogenes that, according to the Socratic view of virtue and knowledge, the distinction between good and bad people entails the rejection of Protagoras' human measure doctrine. Socrates is aware, of course, that Protagoras would probably want to make several objections to his claims, but the point of the exercise is not to convince Protagoras (or even Hermogenes) about anything. It is simply to *remind* Hermogenes why, from a Socratic point of view, the human measure doctrine must be false.

Let us consider the first part of the argument (386a8-c1):

> ΣΩ. Τί δέ; ἐς τόδε ἤδη ἐξηνέχθης, ὥστε μὴ πάνυ σοι δοκεῖν εἶναί τινα ἄνθρωπον πονηρόν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, ἀλλὰ πολλάκις δὴ αὐτὸ πέπονθα, ὥστε μοι δοκεῖν πάνυ πονηροὺς εἶναί τινας ἀνθρώπους, καὶ μάλα συχνούς.
>
> ΣΩ. Τί δέ; πάνυ χρηστοὶ οὔπω σοι ἔδοξαν εἶναι;

ΕΡΜ. Καὶ μάλα ὀλίγοι.
ΣΩ. Ἔδοξαν δ' οὖν;
ΕΡΜ. Ἔμοιγε.
ΣΩ. Πῶς οὖν τοῦτο τίθεσαι; ἆρ' ὧδε· τοὺς μὲν πάνυ χρηστοὺς πάνυ φρονίμους, τοὺς δὲ πάνυ πονηροὺς πάνυ ἄφρονας;
ΕΡΜ. Ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ οὕτως.

Soc. How about this? Were you carried away to the point where you really didn't believe that any person is bad?
Her. Good heavens, no. I have experienced that so many times that I have come to believe that some people are very bad, and a great number too.
Soc. What about very good people? Haven't you yet believed that some people are very good?
Her. Only very few people.
Soc. So you have believed this?
Her. I have.
Soc. Then how do you explain this? Do you regard the very good as very wise, and the very bad as very ignorant?
Her. Yes, that's what I believe.

With characteristic complexity, Socrates begins by introducing a new topic which appears only marginally relevant, but at the same time mimicks Hermogenes' choice of words, thereby intimating a close connection between being led to the human measure doctrine and being led to hold that there are no bad people. In reply, Hermogenes informs Socrates that he has believed many people to be very bad and only a few people to be very good. How should we interpret this statement? Francesco Ademollo takes Hermogenes to be saying that *most people* are very bad, while a few are very good.[43] If that is what Hermogenes means to say, Ademollo is right to contrast his view (which Ademollo takes to be a traditional Greek view) with the Socratic position that most people are neither very good nor very bad, but somewhere in between (cf. *Phd.* 89d-90b).[44] But Hermogenes is not talking about people in general. He is talking about (a relatively small group of) very bad and very good people, and he is saying that there are (relatively) many very bad people, and few very good people. This view is, in fact, very Socratic. In Book 6 of the *Republic*, Socrates not only endorses this view, but also explains why there are relatively many very bad people and few very good people. *As a rule*, if a person with a philosophical nature (the only kind of person who can become either very good or very bad) grows up in a bad society, the person becomes very bad instead of very good. And since all existing societies are bad, there are many

[43] Ademollo 2011: 81; cf. Goldschmidt 1940: 54-55.
[44] Ademollo 2011: 81.

more very bad people than very good people (487b-495a). Thus, far from expressing a traditional Greek view (opposed to the Socratic view), Hermogenes appears to express a specifically Socratic view.

This impression is further reinforced by the second part of the present passage (ΣΩ. Πῶς οὖν τοῦτο τίθεσαι; […] ΕΡΜ. Ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ οὕτως.). Without any introduction or elaboration, Socrates asks Hermogenes whether he would agree to regard very good people as very wise and very bad people as very ignorant. The idea that virtue is knowledge, and vice is ignorance, is not a commonly held belief. It is what scholars refer to as Socratic moral intellectualism, explained and defended at length in the *Meno*, *Protagoras*, and *Gorgias*.[45]. In the *Cratylus*, however, Socrates secures Hermogenes' explicit commitment to this position with only the briefest of descriptions. Clearly, there is no need to explain or defend anything, only to remind Hermogenes of things he already believes.

Next, Socrates reveals why he has introduced the topics of virtue and knowledge into a discussion of Protagoras' human measure doctrine (386c2-d2):

> ΣΩ. Οἷόν τε οὖν, εἰ Πρωταγόρας ἀληθῆ ἔλεγεν καὶ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ ἀλήθεια, τὸ οἷα ἂν δοκῇ ἑκάστῳ τοιαῦτα καὶ εἶναι, τοὺς μὲν ἡμῶν φρονίμους εἶναι, τοὺς δὲ ἄφρονας;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οὐ δῆτα.
>
> ΣΩ. Καὶ ταῦτά γε, ὡς ἐγῷμαι, σοὶ πάνυ δοκεῖ, φρονήσεως οὔσης καὶ ἀφροσύνης μὴ πάνυ δυνατὸν εἶναι Πρωταγόραν ἀληθῆ λέγειν· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄν που τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ὁ ἕτερος τοῦ ἑτέρου φρονιμώτερος εἴη, εἴπερ ἃ ἂν ἑκάστῳ δοκῇ ἑκάστῳ ἀληθῆ ἔσται.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔστι ταῦτα.

> Soc. Is it possible then – if Protagoras was telling the truth, and the truth is this: that whatever any given person believes, that is the case for him – is it possible that some of us are wise, and some are ignorant?
>
> Her. No, it isn't.
>
> Soc. And here is what you really believe, I think – that since there is wisdom and ignorance, it really isn't possible that Protagoras was telling the truth. For there is truly no way, I suppose, that one person could be wiser than another, if what any given person believes will be true for him.
>
> Her. That's right.

Socrates' general strategy is very simple. First, he makes Hermogenes agree to the *incompatibility* between Protagoras' human measure doctrine and the view that some people are wise, and some are ignorant (ΣΩ. Οἷόν τε οὖν…ΕΡΜ. Οὐ δῆτα.). Then, he

[45] Ademollo 2011: 82 recognizes that this is a genuinely Socratic belief, and not a commonly held belief. On Socratic moral intellectualism, see Segvic 2000.

makes Hermogenes agree that, given his belief that there is wisdom and ignorance, the human measure doctrine must be false (ΣΩ. Καὶ ταῦτά γε, ὡς ἐγῷμαι, σοὶ πάνυ δοκεῖ…ΕΡΜ. Ἔστι ταῦτα.). Is this argument too simple? What exactly makes the human measure doctrine *incompatible* with the distinction between wisdom and ignorance? In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates addresses the question on behalf of Protagoras and presents an argument for regarding the two views as compatible (166a-168c). The suggestion, in a nutshell, is to account for wisdom, not in terms of truth, but in terms of goodness. "The wise man", Socrates says in the voice of Protagoras, "is the man who in any case where bad things both appear and are for one of us, works a change and makes good things appear and be for him."[46] Against this subtle attempt to reconcile the human measure doctrine with the distinction between wisdom and ignorance, Socrates puts forward an even subtler argument, as follows (170a-171d). Most people believe that wise people make true judgements and ignorant people make false judgements; and the human measure doctrine rules out the possibility of false belief. But if most people have the true belief that ignorant people make false judgements, then the human measure doctrine is false. And if most people have the false belief that ignorant people make false judgements, then the human measure doctrine is also false. In either case, the human measure doctrine is false.[47]

Why does Socrates not go into any of these issues in the Cratylus? Scholars have speculated that the *Cratylus* is earlier than the *Theaetetus* and only makes a first stab at dealing with the topic,[48] or that Hermogenes does not have the intellectual abilities or the moral character to engage in this kind of argument.[49] The real answer, I believe, is that Hermogenes, unlike both Theaetetus and Theodorus, is an experienced Socratic who only needs Socrates to remind him (and not to demonstrate in detail) that, given his views about virtue and wisdom, he believes that the human measure doctrine cannot possibly be true.

A rather different challenge to the Socratic view of the nature of things is the peculiar ontology of Euthydemus. Socrates treats it only very briefly (386d3-7):

> ΣΩ. Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδὲ κατ' Εὐθύδημόν γε οἶμαι σοὶ δοκεῖ πᾶσι πάντα ὁμοίως εἶναι ἅμα καὶ ἀεί· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν οὕτως εἶεν οἱ μὲν χρηστοί, οἱ δὲ πονηροί, εἰ ὁμοίως ἅπασι καὶ ἀεὶ ἀρετή τε καὶ κακία εἴη.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἀληθῆ λέγεις.

> Soc. And neither, I think, do you agree with Euthydemus that all things belong to all things in the same way at the same time and always. For

[46] *Tht.* 166d4-7: καὶ σοφίαν καὶ σοφὸν ἄνδρα πολλοῦ δέω τὸ μὴ φάναι εἶναι, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν τοῦτον καὶ λέγω σοφόν, ὃς ἄν τινι ἡμῶν, ᾧ φαίνεται καὶ ἔστι κακά, μεταβάλλων ποιήσῃ ἀγαθὰ φαίνεσθαί τε καὶ εἶναι. Translation from Burnyeat 1990.

[47] The classic study of this argument is Burnyeat 1976.

[48] Ademollo 2011: 84.

[49] Goldschmidt 1940: 54.

> people couldn't be either good or bad, if virtue and vice always belonged to all things in the same way.
>
> Her. That's true.

Socrates uses the same line of reasoning as before: Since Hermogenes believes that some people are good and others are bad, he must believe that Euthydemus' view about the nature of things is false, because this view rules out the possibility that some people are good and others are bad. But what is Euthydemus' view? As my translation indicates, I regard πᾶσι and ἅπασι as datives of possession. Other scholars have construed them as datives of relation and offered translations along the lines of "...all things are in the same way for all people at the same time and always...", and "...if virtue and vice always were in the same way for all people".[50]

The second interpretation may seem to have the advantage of aligning more smoothly with the previous statement of Protagoras' human measure doctrine (cf. 386a1-3: ὡς ἄρα οἷα μὲν ἂν ἐμοὶ φαίνηται τὰ πράγματα εἶναι, τοιαῦτα μὲν ἔστιν **ἐμοί**, οἷα δ' ἂν σοί, τοιαῦτα δὲ **σοί**). Further, it may seem very reasonable to take πᾶσι πάντα ὁμοίως εἶναι ἅμα καὶ ἀεί as meaning, roughly, that the nature of any given thing is relative, not to each person individually, but to all people collectively.[51] But what about the supposed incompatibility between Euthydemus' ontology and Hermogenes' view that some people are good, and others are bad? According to the second interpretation, Euthydemus is committed to the view that virtue is subjectively the same for all people, and that vice is subjectively the same for all people. In other words, it will never be the case that one person will be (subjectively) good for some people, and (subjectively) bad for other people. This position seems coherent (rather than incompatible) with the view that some people are good, and others are bad. The apparently insurmountable problem for this interpretation, then, is to explain why Socrates and Hermogenes would take two apparently coherent views to be obviously incompatible.

The first interpretation does not lead to any such problem. If Euthydemus believes that all things belong to all things in the same way, always and at the same time, he has thereby committed himself to the view, first, that virtue belongs to all things in the same way, always and at the same time, and, second, that vice belongs to all things in the same way, always and at the same time. In other words, everything (including everyone) is always equally good and bad. There is no problem seeing why Socrates and Hermogenes would take this view to be obviously incompatible with the view that some people are good, and others are bad.

Socrates concludes (386d8-e5):

> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν εἰ μήτε πᾶσι πάντα ἐστὶν ὁμοίως ἅμα καὶ ἀεί, μήτε ἑκάστῳ ἰδίᾳ ἕκαστον, δῆλον δὴ ὅτι αὐτὰ αὑτῶν οὐσίαν ἔχοντά τινα βέβαιόν ἐστι τὰ πράγματα, οὐ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, οὐδὲ ὑφ' ἡμῶν ἑλκόμενα ἄνω καὶ κάτω

[50] Goldschmidt 1940: 54; for a discussion of the two types of interpretation, cf. Ademollo 2011: 84-6.
[51] Ademollo 2011: 85 offers a more precise formulation: ∀x ∀F (x is F ↔ ∀y ∀t (x is F for y at t).

τῷ ἡμετέρῳ φαντάσματι, ἀλλὰ καθ' αὑτὰ πρὸς τὴν αὑτῶν οὐσίαν ἔχοντα ᾗπερ πέφυκεν.

ΕΡΜ. Δοκεῖ μοι, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὕτω.

> Soc. So, if all things do not belong to all things in the same way at the same time and always, and if each thing is not for each person individually, things themselves obviously have their own "firm" being. They are not relative to us and are not dragged up and down by us and our impression. Rather, they are by themselves relative to their own being and in the state which is natural.
>
> Her. Yes, Socrates, that's what I think.

The conclusion is clear: Since Protagoras' and Euthydemus' views are wrong, things have their own "firm" nature. However, as David Sedley has pointed out, Socrates' treatment of Protagoras' and Euthydemus' views does not entitle him to this general conclusion.[52] The fact that their views are not generally true only shows that *some* things have their own "firm" nature. How do we explain this? Sedley proposes to ascribe the amended conclusion ("*some*, most, or all things have their own nature") to Socrates.[53] But Socrates' conclusion is clearly about things in general, and not just about some things. First, since Socrates describes Protagoras' and Euthydemus' views as views about things in general (εἰ μήτε **πᾶσι πάντα** ἐστὶν ὁμοίως ἅμα καὶ ἀεί, μήτε ἑκάστῳ ἰδίᾳ **ἕκαστον**) Socrates' conclusion should also be taken as describing a view about things in general (δῆλον δὴ ὅτι **αὐτὰ** αὑτῶν οὐσίαν ἔχοντά τινα βέβαιόν ἐστι **τὰ πράγματα** [...] ἀλλὰ καθ' αὑτὰ πρὸς τὴν αὑτῶν οὐσίαν ἔχοντα ᾗπερ πέφυκεν). Second, when Socrates subsequently moves on to the question about actions, he clearly takes himself to be talking about the general classes of things and actions, and not just about subclasses of those classes (386e6-8).

In my view, then, we should refrain from ascribing the amended conclusion to Socrates and instead recognize that Socrates' argument about the nature of things is invalid. And the explanation for this, I believe, is that Socrates has no need to present a fully argued case, because as a Socratic Hermogenes already believes the conclusion. In other words, Socrates has no need (and therefore is not trying) to *convince* Hermogenes of anything. Socrates only needs to *remind* Hermogenes of the main opposing views and why, in general, they cannot be the truth about the nature of things.

### 1.2.2 The nature of actions (386e6-387d9)

Having reminded Hermogenes of his Socratic view about the nature of things, Socrates now turns to the nature of actions (386e6-8):

[52] Sedley 2003: 56; Goldschmidt 1940: 54: "Argumentation trop facile".
[53] Sedley 2003: 57.

> ΣΩ. Πότερον οὖν αὐτὰ μὲν ἂν εἴη οὕτω πεφυκότα, αἱ δὲ πράξεις αὐτῶν οὐ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον; ἢ οὐ καὶ αὗται ἕν τι εἶδος τῶν ὄντων εἰσίν, αἱ πράξεις;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε καὶ αὗται.

> Soc. Do things themselves then have such a nature, while actions involving them do not likewise?[54] Or are they, I mean actions, not also one kind of beings?
>
> Her. Certainly, they are too.

At this point Socrates seems to take himself to have established that all things have their own nature and to make the new claim that actions have their own nature because they are one kind of things. However, David Sedley has pointed out that this interpretation ascribes an invalid argument to Socrates since Socrates has not shown that all things have their own nature, only that *some things* have their own nature.[55] Sedley's own interpretation avoids this apparent problem by taking Socrates to be arguing that actions have their own nature *by being focused on* things that have their own nature. Sedley explains:

> Socrates' inference is that if X has its own nature, then any action which is a way of dealing with X has its own nature. That seems to be the meaning of the curious question 'Could it be the case that things themselves have such a nature, but the actions (*praxeis*) belonging to them do not likewise?' Actions, Socrates means, get their own nature derivatively from the things in relation to which the agent acts.[56]

Sedley points to Socrates' first question and more specifically to the phrase αἱ πράξεις αὐτῶν as support for his reading. According to Sedley, what Socrates means to say is that actions get their own nature derivatively from the things in relation to which the agent acts.[57] But if that is what Socrates meant to say, surely he would have expressed the idea much more clearly than by using the expression αἱ πράξεις αὐτῶν. My own view is that Socrates, in asking this question, is only setting out a hypothetical possibility - the possibility that things have their own nature, while actions involving them do not. As his next question shows, however, Socrates does not believe that this is actually true; rather, Socrates believes that actions are a kind of beings, just as things are

[54] How should we take the genitive in the expression αἱ δὲ πράξεις αὐτῶν? Sedley construes it as a genitive of possession ("the actions belonging to them"). I understand it as a genitive of object (literally: "the doings of them"; cf. expressions such as "the cutting of something").

[55] Sedley 2003: 56.

[56] Sedley 2003: 57.

[57] Cf. Goldschmidt 1940: 55: "comme ces actes se font sur les choses, ils participent de la stabilité de choses".

(ἢ οὐ καὶ αὗται ἔν τι εἶδος τῶν ὄντων εἰσίν, αἱ πράξεις;). That is, Socrates believes that actions have their own stable being, just as things do. Thus, Socrates simply asks Hermogenes to confirm that actions in general have their own being *without giving any reason for claiming this*.[58] Thus, Socrates is relying on Hermogenes already sharing the Socratic notion that actions (just as things) have their own stable being or nature.

Socrates goes on to explain what it means for actions to have their own nature (387a1-b7):

> ΣΩ. Κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἄρα φύσιν καὶ αἱ πράξεις πράττονται, οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν δόξαν. οἷον ἐάν τι ἐπιχειρήσωμεν ἡμεῖς τῶν ὄντων τέμνειν, πότερον ἡμῖν τμητέον ἕκαστον ὡς ἂν ἡμεῖς βουλώμεθα καὶ ᾧ ἂν βουληθῶμεν, ἢ ἐὰν μὲν κατὰ τὴν φύσιν βουληθῶμεν ἕκαστον τέμνειν τοῦ τέμνειν τε καὶ τέμνεσθαι καὶ ᾧ πέφυκε, τεμοῦμέν τε καὶ πλέον τι ἡμῖν ἔσται καὶ ὀρθῶς πράξομεν τοῦτο, ἐὰν δὲ παρὰ φύσιν, ἐξαμαρτησόμεθά τε καὶ οὐδὲν πράξομεν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ οὕτω.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἐὰν κάειν τι ἐπιχειρήσωμεν, οὐ κατὰ πᾶσαν δόξαν δεῖ κάειν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ὀρθήν; αὕτη δ' ἐστὶν ᾗ ἐπεφύκει ἕκαστον κάεσθαί τε καὶ κάειν καὶ ᾧ ἐπεφύκει;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔστι ταῦτα.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τἆλλα οὕτω;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.

> Soc. Actions too, then, are performed according to their own nature, and not according to our belief. For instance, if we attempt to cut something of the things that are, should we cut it (ἕκαστον) however we want, and with whatever we want? Or is it rather the case that if we want to cut it (ἕκαστον) according to the nature of cutting and being cut and with what is natural, then we'll cut, we'll succeed,[59] and we'll perform the action correctly, whereas if we do it against nature, we'll fail and get nothing done?
>
> Her. I think so.

[58] That Socrates takes himself to be talking about actions in general and not about a more narrowly defined group of actions (e.g. those involving things which have their own nature) is clear from his next statement (387a1-2: Κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἄρα φύσιν καὶ αἱ πράξεις πράττονται, οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν δόξαν) and from his summary towards the end of the section (387d1-2: Αἱ δὲ πράξεις ἐφάνησαν ἡμῖν οὐ πρὸς ἡμᾶς οὖσαι, ἀλλ' αὐτῶν τινα ἰδίαν φύσιν ἔχουσαι;)

[59] Ademollo translates πλέον τι ἡμῖν ἔσται "we'll achieve something". But "we'll succeed" seems more appropriate if we compare a similar use of the phrase in the *Apology* (18e-19a): Εἶεν· ἀπολογητέον δή, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, καὶ ἐπιχειρητέον ὑμῶν ἐξελέσθαι τὴν διαβολὴν ἣν ὑμεῖς ἐν πολλῷ χρόνῳ ἔσχετε ταύτην ἐν οὕτως ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ. **βουλοίμην μὲν οὖν ἂν** τοῦτο οὕτως γενέσθαι, εἴ τι ἄμεινον καὶ ὑμῖν καὶ ἐμοί, καὶ **πλέον τί με ποιῆσαι** ἀπολογούμενον· οἶμαι δὲ αὐτὸ χαλεπὸν εἶναι, καὶ οὐ πάνυ με λανθάνει οἷόν ἐστιν. ὅμως τοῦτο μὲν ἴτω ὅπῃ τῷ θεῷ φίλον, τῷ δὲ νόμῳ πειστέον καὶ ἀπολογητέον.

> Soc. Isn't it also the case that, if we attempt to burn something, we shouldn't burn it according to just any belief, but according to the correct belief? And this is how it is natural for it (ἕκαστον) to be burnt and to burn it, and with what is natural?
>
> Her. That's right.
>
> Soc. And is it the same for the rest?
>
> Her. Certainly.

The basic line of reasoning is: Since actions have their own nature, we only perform those actions succesfully if we perform them according to their nature; otherwise we fail to perform them. But what is the level of generality in Socrates' talk about actions, objects, and instruments? For instance, is he talking about cutting as such or about specific forms of cutting? Is he talking about cutting things in general or about cutting different specific things (a tree, a leg, etc.)? And finally, is he talking about cutting with some generic instrument or about cutting with different specific instruments (an axe, a surgical knife, etc.).

Let us consider the first example: the act of cutting. Socrates asks Hermogenes to imagine that they were attempting to cut "something of the things that are" (ἐάν **τι** ἐπιχειρήσωμεν ἡμεῖς **τῶν ὄντων** τέμνειν) and then contrasts two scenarios. The first scenario: Should they cut the thing however they want, and with whatever they want (πότερον ἡμῖν τμητέον ἕκαστον ὡς ἂν ἡμεῖς βουλώμεθα καὶ ᾧ ἂν βουληθῶμεν)? What does Socrates mean by the phrase "however we want, and with whatever we want"? Does he mean "no matter what form of cutting we want to apply and no matter what cutting instrument we want to use"? Or does he mean "no matter what form of movement we want to apply and no matter what instrument we want to use"? The sentence itself does not seem to offer a clear answer to this question, but I think the context does. First, Socrates' initial description invoked the general notion of cutting anything cuttable (τι [...] τῶν ὄντων τέμνειν) and not the more specific notion of different forms of cutting different specific things. Second, we would expect subjectivism about the nature of actions to be primarily about what counts as cutting and a cutting instrument *as such*, and only secondarily about specific forms of cutting and specific cutting instruments. Third, we would expect the two contrasting scenarios to operate at the same level of generality, and, as we shall see shortly, the second scenario (387a5-9) is clearly about cutting as such and not about specific forms of cutting. Therefore, I conclude that the phrase "however we want, and with whatever we want" should be taken to mean, roughly, "no matter what form of movement we want to apply and no matter what instrument we want to use".

The second scenario: Or will Socrates and Hermogenes only succeed in cutting the thing if they want to cut it according to the nature of cutting and being cut and with what is natural (387a5-9: ἢ ἐὰν μὲν κατὰ τὴν φύσιν βουληθῶμεν ἕκαστον τέμνειν τοῦ τέμνειν τε καὶ τέμνεσθαι καὶ ᾧ πέφυκε, τεμοῦμέν τε καὶ πλέον τι ἡμῖν ἔσται καὶ ὀρθῶς πράξομεν τοῦτο, ἐὰν δὲ παρὰ φύσιν, ἐξαμαρτησόμεθά τε καὶ οὐδὲν πράξομεν;)? This

description is clearly about cutting as such and not about specific forms of cutting. Socrates does not say "according to the nature of this specific form of cutting" or "according to the nature of cutting this specific thing". He only says, in very general terms, "according to the nature of both cutting and being cut" (κατὰ τὴν φύσιν…τοῦ τέμνειν τε καὶ τέμνεσθαι). But why does Socrates mention both cutting and *being cut*? According to David Sedley, the idea is that the nature of cutting derives from the nature of being cut (which in turn derives from the nature of the object being cut).[60] But Socrates describes cutting and being cut as on a par ("the nature of both cutting and being cut") and says nothing about the one being derivable from the other. In my view, Socrates' careful expression is meant to anticipate the objection that the same action has one nature for the agent and another nature for the patient. According to Socrates, cutting and being cut has one and the same nature, both for the agent and for the patient.[61]

Let us now consider the second example: the act of burning. Does this example work in the same way as the previous example? I think it does. And if we consider the end of the passage, Socrates and Hermogenes also seem to think so (ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τἆλλα οὕτω; ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.). According to Ademollo, however, there *is* a crucial difference between the two examples:

> Socrates started out with the alternative between cutting something according to the generic nature of cutting something and altogether failing to cut it. But now, as the position of 'each thing' (b4) shows, he has seamlessly moved to the alternative between burning something according to *that thing's* specific nature and altogether failing to burn it.[62]

The question, as Ademollo brings out, turns on the interpretation of ἕκαστον in this passage. Let me cite the passage again (387b2-7):

> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἐὰν κάειν τι ἐπιχειρήσωμεν, οὐ κατὰ πᾶσαν δόξαν δεῖ κάειν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ὀρθήν; αὕτη δ' ἐστὶν ᾗ ἐπεφύκει ἕκαστον κάεσθαί τε καὶ κάειν καὶ ᾧ ἐπεφύκει;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔστι ταῦτα.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τἆλλα οὕτω;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.

> Soc. Isn't it also the case that, if we attempt to burn something, we shouldn't burn it according to just any belief, but according to the correct belief? And is this how it is natural for it (ἕκαστον) to be burnt and to burn it, and with what is natural?
>
> Her. That's right.

[60] Sedley 2003: 57.
[61] For Aristotle's related view, see *Ph.* 3.3.; cf. Marmodoro 2007; Marmodoro 2014.
[62] Ademollo 2011: 99.

> Soc. And is it the same for the rest?
> Her. Certainly.

The most striking thing about the passage is how much Socrates builds on the previous example. The first question is a compressed version of the first example – something which Socrates himself brings out by beginning the sentence with the phrase "Isn't it also the case [...]" (Οὐκοῦν καὶ [...]). This time Socrates asks Hermogenes to imagine that they were attempting to *burn* something (ἐὰν κάειν τι ἐπιχειρήσωμεν) and clearly expects him to reject the first scenario (οὐ κατὰ πᾶσαν δόξαν δεῖ κάειν) and agree to the second scenario (ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ὀρθήν;). The reason why Socrates has this expectation is that he is basically asking the same question as before. Cutting (or burning) something "according to just any belief" is the same as cutting (or burning) something "however one wants and with whatever one wants". And cutting (or burning) something "according to the correct belief" is the same as cutting (or burning) something "according to the nature of both cutting and being cut (or both burning and being burnt), and with what is natural".

To make sure that Hermogenes understands and agrees with this, Socrates asks his second question (αὕτη δ' ἐστὶν ᾗ ἐπεφύκει ἕκαστον κάεσθαί τε καὶ κάειν καὶ ᾧ ἐπεφύκει;). In my view, this formulation is exactly equivalent to the previous one (κατὰ τὴν φύσιν [...] ἕκαστον τέμνειν τοῦ τέμνειν τε καὶ τέμνεσθαι καὶ ᾧ πέφυκε). And Socrates' use of the pluperfect (ἐπεφύκει) could indeed be taken as a reference to the previous formulation ("and this is how it was natural...") and thus as further evidence that Socrates sees the two formulations as equivalent. According to Ademollo, however, the position of ἕκαστον shows that Socrates here introduces the more specific notion of burning something according to *that thing's* specific nature. Let me explain why I think both the meaning and the syntactic role of ἕκαστον goes against such a reading.

First, Socrates uses ἕκαστον, both in this case and in the previous example, to refer back to the indefinite pronoun in the opening phrase (ἐὰν κάειν τι ἐπιχειρήσωμεν; cf. ἐάν τι ἐπιχειρήσωμεν ἡμεῖς τῶν ὄντων τέμνειν). Socrates is not talking about "each thing", but about that indefinite thing which he introduced at the beginning of the sentence – hence my translation "it". Socrates could have chosen other ways of referring back to the indefinite pronoun (e.g. ἐκεῖνο or τοῦτο),[63] but the choice of ἕκαστον shows that he is keen to keep the sense of indefinite generality rather than make the object of the action seem more definite or specific.

Second, while the English translation ("And is this how it is natural *for it* to be burnt and to burn it, and with what is natural?") may seem to suggest the notion of cutting

[63] A TLG search provided me with these examples: Xen. *An.* 7.6.32: εἰ δέ **τι καλὸν** πρὸς τοὺς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ βαρβάρους ἐπέπρακτο ὑμῖν, οὐ καὶ **ἐκεῖνο** σῶν ἔχετε καὶ πρὸς ἐκείνοις νῦν ἄλλην εὔκλειαν προσειλήφατε καὶ τοὺς ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ Θρᾷκας ἐφ' οὓς ἐστρατεύσασθε κρατήσαντες; *Grg.* 467d-e: ΣΩ. Ἄλλο τι οὖν οὕτω καὶ περὶ πάντων; ἐάν τίς **τι** πράττῃ ἕνεκά **του**, οὐ **τοῦτο** βούλεται ὃ πράττει, ἀλλ' **ἐκεῖνο** οὗ ἕνεκα πράττει;

something according to *that thing's* specific nature, there is no such suggestion in the syntax of the Greek. The impersonal verb ἐπεφύκει ("it is natural") has two subjects: ἕκαστον κάεσθαί ("that it is burnt") and ἕκαστον [...] κάειν ("that one burns it"). The position of ἕκαστον early in the sentence makes no difference to the meaning.

Thus, just as in the previous example of cutting, Socrates is talking about the generic nature of burning something and not about "burning something according to *that thing's* specific nature", as Ademollo claims.

Having outlined what it means for actions to have their own nature, Socrates moves on to the acts of speaking and naming (387b8-d9):

> ΣΩ. Ἆρ' οὖν οὐ καὶ τὸ λέγειν μία τις τῶν πράξεών ἐστιν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ναί.
>
> ΣΩ. Πότερον οὖν ᾗ ἄν τῳ δοκῇ λεκτέον εἶναι, ταύτῃ λέγων ὀρθῶς λέξει, ἢ ἐὰν μὲν ᾗ πέφυκε τὰ πράγματα λέγειν τε καὶ λέγεσθαι καὶ ᾧ, ταύτῃ καὶ τούτῳ λέγῃ, πλέον τέ τι ποιήσει καὶ ἐρεῖ· ἂν δὲ μή, ἐξαμαρτήσεταί τε καὶ οὐδὲν ποιήσει;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οὕτω μοι δοκεῖ ὡς λέγεις.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν τοῦ λέγειν μόριον τὸ ὀνομάζειν; ὀνομάζοντες γάρ που λέγουσι τοὺς λόγους.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ ὀνομάζειν πρᾶξίς τίς ἐστιν, εἴπερ καὶ τὸ λέγειν πρᾶξίς τις ἦν περὶ τὰ πράγματα;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ναί.
>
> ΣΩ. Αἱ δὲ πράξεις ἐφάνησαν ἡμῖν οὐ πρὸς ἡμᾶς οὖσαι, ἀλλ' αὐτῶν τινα ἰδίαν φύσιν ἔχουσαι;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔστι ταῦτα.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ ὀνομαστέον ᾗ πέφυκε τὰ πράγματα ὀνομάζειν τε καὶ ὀνομάζεσθαι καὶ ᾧ, ἀλλ' οὐχ ᾗ ἂν ἡμεῖς βουληθῶμεν, εἴπερ τι τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν μέλλει ὁμολογούμενον εἶναι; καὶ οὕτω μὲν ἂν πλέον τι ποιοῖμεν καὶ ὀνομάζοιμεν, ἄλλως δὲ οὔ;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Φαίνεταί μοι.

> Soc. Isn't speaking then also one kind of action?
>
> Her. Yes.
>
> Soc. Will one then speak correctly if one speaks however one thinks one should speak? Or is it rather the case that if one speaks how it is natural for things to be said and to say them, and with what is natural, one will succeed and speak? Whereas if one doesn't do this, one will fail and get nothing done.
>
> Her. I think you're right.
>
> Soc. Isn't naming a part of speaking? For when people speak sentences they name things, I suppose.

> Her. Certainly.
>
> Soc. Isn't naming also a kind of action, just as speaking was a kind of action involving things?
>
> Her. Yes.
>
> Soc. And we saw that actions are not relative to us, but have their own individual nature?
>
> Her. That's right.
>
> Soc. Isn't it also the case that one should name how it is natural to name things and for them to be named, and with what is natural, and not however we want to, if there is to be some coherence with our previous claims? And this way we'll succeed and name, but not in any other way?
>
> Her. I think so.

Scholars treat this passage as the first crucial point at which Socrates (apparently) shows that Hermogenes' position cannot be right, and that there must be a natural correctness of names.[64] According to David Sedley, Socrates here argues that speaking can be done in accordance with, or contrary to, its own nature (i.e. well or badly) since speaking has its own nature (in virtue of being a kind of action focused on those things which have their own stable nature). Thereby, according to Sedley, Socrates has shown that Hermogenes' position cannot be right, and that there must be a natural correctness of names. According to Francesco Ademollo, on the other hand, Socrates produces the following argument:

> If you are to name something, you cannot name it "as you want", as Hermogenes holds; you must name it in the way in which, and with the tool (i.e. the name) with which, it is natural to name *that* thing, as Cratylus holds, otherwise you will not name it - and *pro tanto* you will not name anything - at all.[65]

In my view, both Sedley and Ademollo construe Socrates' argument incorrectly and wrongly assume that Socrates intends this argument to show that Hermogenes' position cannot be right, and that there must be a natural correctness of names.

First, against Sedley's construal of Socrates' argument, nothing in this passage indicates that Socrates argues that speaking has its own nature *in virtue of being a kind of action focused on those things which have their own stable nature.* On the contrary, Socrates simply states that speaking and naming have their own nature without giving any reason except the general back-reference to the claim that actions in general have their own nature (387d1-2: Αἱ δὲ πράξεις ἐφάνησαν ἡμῖν οὐ πρὸς ἡμᾶς οὖσαι, ἀλλ' αὑτῶν τινα ἰδίαν φύσιν ἔχουσαι;). Furthermore, against Ademollo's construal of Socrates' argument, nothing in this passage indicates that Socrates argues that if you are

[64] Sedley 2003: 54-58; Ademollo 2011: 100-106.

[65] Ademollo 2011: 104-105.

to name something, you must name it in the way in which, and with the tool (i.e. the name) with which, it is natural to name *that* thing. On the contrary, Socrates is clearly talking in generic terms about how, and with what instrument, one must name things in general (τὰ πράγματα) if one is to count as naming something (387d4-8: Οὐκοῦν καὶ ὀνομαστέον ᾗ πέφυκε τὰ πράγματα ὀνομάζειν τε καὶ ὀνομάζεσθαι καὶ ᾧ, ἀλλ' οὐχ ᾗ ἂν ἡμεῖς βουληθῶμεν, εἴπερ τι τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν μέλλει ὁμολογούμενον εἶναι; καὶ οὕτω μὲν ἂν πλέον τι ποιοῖμεν καὶ ὀνομάζοιμεν, ἄλλως δὲ οὔ;).[66]

Second, contrary to both Sedley's view and Ademollo's view, nothing in this passage indicates that Socrates takes himself to have shown that Hermogenes' position cannot be right, and that there must be a natural correctness of names. On the contrary, rather than pause to comment on the relation between the claims about the nature of naming and Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names, Socrates immediately moves on to the next stage in the argument (388d10: Φέρε δή, ὃ ἔδει τέμνειν, ἔδει τῳ, φαμέν, τέμνειν;), thereby indicating that the arguments about the nature of actions are merely meant *to prepare the ground* for the following arguments. Socrates is right to do so, since nothing he has said so far is specific enough to go against Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names. Hermogenes can easily grant, on the one hand, that one should name things in general in accordance with the generic nature of naming and with the generic instrument (i.e. a name), if one is to succeed in naming, and still claim, on the other hand, that any person is allowed to call any given thing a different name which this person has given to this thing.

## 1.3 Instruments and their expert makers (387d10-389a4)

Having reminded Hermogenes that the act of naming has its own nature, Socrates goes on to show, first, that a name is an instrument for teaching and for separating being (387d10-388c2), and, second, that name-giving is not a task for everyone, but the task of the expert name-maker (who is a *nomothetes* or "custom-giver") (388c3-389a4). How should we understand Socrates' two claims? And what is the relation between these claims and Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names?

First, regarding Socrates' account of the name as an instrument for teaching and for separating being, scholars agree that, at least on a first reading, Socrates presents his claim as a kind of common sense account of the ordinary use of names. According to this account, in the words of Francesco Ademollo, "the function of a name is to convey information about its referent, by ascribing certain features to it, and thereby pick out or distinguish it from other objects".[67] At the same time, scholars emphasize that, on a second reading (and especially after the dialectician has been revealed as the intended user of names), the first claim should be read as a teleological account of

[66] For further criticism of Ademollo's interpretation of this passage, cf. Schofield 2013.
[67] Ademollo 2011: 111; cf. Sedley 2003: 59-66.

philosophical name use.[68] More specifically, the account of the name as an instrument for teaching and for separating being "should remind us, as has often been noticed, of the conception of dialectic as the art of dividing up reality into its natural kinds."[69] At a deeper level, then, what Socrates means to say is that the function of a name is to distinguish one kind from other kinds and thereby serve as an instrument for the dialectician in the construction of definitions. To quote Ademollo, the claim is, in short, "that division and definition are the function of names".[70]

Second, regarding Socrates' account of the expert name-maker as a *nomothetes*, scholars have traditionally had very different views. Is the account of the *nomothetes* historical or atemporal? And does it describe the *nomothetes* as a mythical personification or as a real expert?[71] Around the middle of the 20th century, Richard Robinson positioned himself within this traditional debate, claiming that "the Cratylus has nothing to say on the origin of names",[72] and that the "lawmaker" (i.e. the *nomothetes*) "is there not as a piece of history but as a mythical device to make it easier to develop an abstract theory."[73] Robinson was followed by, among others, Norman Kretzmann and John Ackrill.[74] But more recent interpreters such as David Sedley and Francesco Ademollo have tried to find a middle ground between the view of the account as purported history and Robinson's view of the account as an atemporal and impersonal theory. According to Sedley (and Ademollo who seems to be in broad agreement with Sedley), the account of the *nomothetes* is intended as an account of name-makers of all periods, and since the account makes reference, not just to the earliest name-makers in human history, but also to the contemporary people who succeed in bringing neologisms into circulation, we can be sure that Socrates is not talking about legislators in the literal (i.e political) sense of the word, but only about linguistic legislators in some metaphorical sense of the word.[75] Sedley further suggests that, in making use of the notion of a linguistic legislator, Socrates is likely borrowing an idea which is "a product of the fifth-century etymological industry, a large-scale Sophistic enterprise of which Plato's *Cratylus* is no more than a faint echo."[76]

Finally, regarding the relation between Socrates' two claims and Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names, scholarly treatments remain surprisingly vague. However, most scholars seem to take Socrates *either* as having already rejected Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names and as simply developing the account of

[68] Ademollo 2011: 112-114; cf. Sedley 2003: 61-64.
[69] Ademollo 2011: 112; cf. Sedley 2003: 59-66.
[70] Ademollo 2011: 113; cf. Sedley 2003: 59-66.
[71] Cf. e.g. Goldschmidt 1940: 61-67.
[72] R. Robinson 1969b: 106.
[73] R. Robinson 1969b: 105.
[74] Kretzmann 1971: 129; Ackrill 1997: 42.
[75] Sedley 2003: 68-69.
[76] Sedley 2003: 70.

natural correctness[77] *or* as putting forward the first claim and/or the second claim as further evidence against Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names.[78]

In this section, I aim to show that, if we keep in mind Hermogenes' character as an experienced Socratic philosopher and Socrates' strategy as especially designed to deal with a Socratic such as Hermogenes, we get a very different, and much more Socratic, understanding of Socrates' account of natural correctness. More specifically, Socrates' account of the name as an instrument for teaching should be understood, not in terms of the *imparting of information*, either about ordinary objects or about the characteristic/essential features of objects, but rather in terms of the Socratic conception of education as a turning of the soul from the world of becoming to the world of being. Further, Socrates' account of the *nomothetes* should be understood, not in terms of a special kind of linguistic legislator - an idea which Socrates either invents *ad hoc* or borrows from the tradition -, but in terms of the Socratic conception of the *nomothetes* (familiar from the *Republic*) as the person ultimately responsible for the *nomos* (i.e. the custom) of a whole culture, including its use of names. Finally, I aim to show that Socrates puts forward his second claim - that name-giving is only the task of the expert name-maker (who is a *nomothetes*) - as the first evidence against Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names.

### 1.3.1 Instruments (387d10-388c2)

Having dealt with things and actions, Socrates now turns his attention to *that with which* we perform actions on things (387d10-388a9):

> ΣΩ. Φέρε δή, ὃ ἔδει τέμνειν, ἔδει τῳ, φαμέν, τέμνειν;
> ΕΡΜ. Ναί.
> ΣΩ. Καὶ ὃ ἔδει κερκίζειν, ἔδει τῳ κερκίζειν; καὶ ὃ ἔδει τρυπᾶν, ἔδει τῳ τρυπᾶν;
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.
> ΣΩ. Καὶ ὃ ἔδει δὴ ὀνομάζειν, ἔδει τῳ ὀνομάζειν;
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔστι ταῦτα.
> ΣΩ. Τί δὲ ἦν ἐκεῖνο ᾧ ἔδει τρυπᾶν;
> ΕΡΜ. Τρύπανον.
> ΣΩ. Τί δὲ ᾧ κερκίζειν;
> ΕΡΜ. Κερκίς.
> ΣΩ. Τί δὲ ᾧ ὀνομάζειν;
> ΕΡΜ. Ὄνομα.
> ΣΩ. Εὖ λέγεις. ὄργανον ἄρα τί ἐστι καὶ τὸ ὄνομα.
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.

[77] This seems to be the view of Barney 2001: 44-45; Sedley 2003: 59-66; cf. R. Robinson 1969a: 124-5.
[78] The first claim: Ademollo 2011: 111; the second claim: Kretzmann 1971: 128-129.

Soc. Very well. That which one should cut, one should cut, we say, with something?

Her. Yes.

Soc. And that which one should *kerkize*,[79] one should *kerkize* with something? And that which one should drill, one should drill with something?

Her. Certainly.

Soc. And so that which one should name, one should name with something?

Her. That's right.

Soc. What is this thing with which one should drill?

Her. A drill.

Soc. And with which one should *kerkize*?

Her. A *kerkis*.

Soc. And with which one should name?

Her. A name.

Soc. Good. So the name is also a kind of instrument.

Her. Certainly.

Earlier in the chapter we saw that one of Socrates' favoured forms of argument is to lead his interlocutor from a few examples to a general conclusion. This passage illustrates another favourite method of argument, which consists in leading the interlocutor from a few examples to a similar view of the topic under discussion. In the present passage, the argument proceeds in two stages. In the first stage (387d10-388a1), Socrates first observes that the acts of cutting, *kerkizing*, and drilling should be done *with something* and then describes the act of naming in similar terms (ΣΩ. Καὶ ὃ ἔδει δὴ ὀνομάζειν, ἔδει τῳ ὀνομάζειν; ΕΡΜ. Ἔστι ταῦτα.). In the second stage (388a2-9), Socrates first observes that drilling is done with a drill, *kerkizing* with a *kerkis*, and naming with a name, and then concludes that the name (like the drill and the *kerkis*) is an instrument (ΣΩ. Εὖ λέγεις. ὄργανον ἄρα τί ἐστι καὶ τὸ ὄνομα. ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.).

The indirect form of argument allows Socrates to conclude that the name (like the drill and the *kerkis*) is an instrument, without stating the general principle which is supposed to support this conclusion. We might think that the principle is so obvious that Socrates does not need to state it. Surely, the principle is simply that for an action to be performed *with something* is for the action to be performed *with an instrument*. Therefore, since the act of naming is performed with a name, the name is an instrument. But that would be to overlook the indications that Socrates is talking about expert actions and not actions in general. First, while cutting and burning in the preceding

[79] The verb κερκίζειν means "to use the κερκίς on something". The κερκίς is a weaving instrument (cf. 388c3), but its exact nature (and hence the correct translation) has proven difficult to determine. I therefore leave the words transliterated and discuss the problem below.

passage probably should be taken as examples of actions in general, the new examples, and especially that of *kerkizing*, indicate that the topic is being narrowed down to the kinds of actions that are the subjects of expertise. Second, while the translation "instrument" for the Greek ὄργανον is likely to make us think of "anything that serves or contributes to the accomplishment of a purpose or end" (*OED*, s.v. *instrument* n., 1.a.), the fact is that, in Plato's dialogues, ὄργανον is almost only used of instruments of expertise.[80] Given these cues, the principle assumed by Socrates rather seems to be that for an expert action to be performed *with something* is for this action to be performed *with an instrument*. Thus, the implicit line of reasoning seems to be that the name is an instrument because the act of naming is an expert action performed with a name. Of course, Socrates has yet to show that the act of naming really is an expert action, and what this conception of naming involves. This he does in the subsequent passage (388a10-c2):

> ΣΩ. Εἰ οὖν ἐγὼ ἐροίμην "Τί ἦν ὄργανον ἡ κερκίς;" οὐχ ᾧ κερκίζομεν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ναί.
>
> ΣΩ. Κερκίζοντες δὲ τί δρῶμεν; οὐ τὴν κρόκην καὶ τοὺς στήμονας συγκεχυμένους διακρίνομεν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ναί.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ τρυπάνου ἕξεις οὕτως εἰπεῖν καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.
>
> ΣΩ. Ἔχεις δὴ καὶ περὶ ὀνόματος οὕτως εἰπεῖν; ὀργάνῳ ὄντι τῷ ὀνόματι ὀνομάζοντες τί ποιοῦμεν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν.
>
> ΣΩ. Ἆρ' οὐ διδάσκομέν τι ἀλλήλους καὶ τὰ πράγματα διακρίνομεν ᾗ ἔχει;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.
>
> ΣΩ. Ὄνομα ἄρα διδασκαλικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον καὶ διακριτικὸν τῆς οὐσίας ὥσπερ κερκὶς ὑφάσματος.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ναί.

[80] The forms of expertise mentioned are hunting, image-making, music, weaving, governing, medicine, seafaring, shipbuilding, house-building, shoemaking, blacksmithing, warfare, wool-working, carpentry, farming, pottery, tree-felling, shepherding, and beekeeping (cf. *Sph.* 235b, 267a; *Plt.* 268b, 281e, 287c-e, 289b, 298c-d; *Phlb.* 54c, 56b; *Symp.* 191a, 192d, 215c; *Alc. I* 129c-d; *Lach.* 182a, 188d; *Ly.* 208d; *Euthyd.* 280c; *Hp. mai.* 295d; *Hp. mi.* 374d; *Clit.* 408a; *Menex.* 249a-b; *Resp.* 370c-d, 374c-d, 397a-399e, 421d-e, 434a-b, 582d; *Ti.* 52e-53a; *Leg.* 643b-c, 669c-d, 677c, 678d, 795a-b, 842d-e, 847d, 956a). The main exception to this rule (in so far as it is an exception) is that ὄργανον is used of the so-called "instruments of the soul", i.e. the senses, the sense-organs, and the intellect (cf. *Tht.* 184d-185d; *Phdr.* 250b; *Resp.* 508b, 518c, 527d; *Ti.* 45A-b). There remain a few passages in which the use of ὄργανον appears broader and/or metaphorical (*Ti.* 33c; 41e-42d; 83e; possibly *Leg.* 920e).

> Soc. So if I were to ask "What instrument was the *kerkis*"?", wasn't it that with which we *kerkize*?
>
> Her. Yes.
>
> Soc. And when we *kerkize*, what do we do? Don't we separate the woof and the warp threads when they are entangled?
>
> Her. Yes.
>
> Soc. Wouldn't you also be able to answer this question about the drill and other instruments?
>
> Her. Certainly.
>
> Soc. So you're also able to answer this question about the name? When we name with the name, which is an instrument, what do we do?
>
> Her. I can't answer that question.
>
> Soc. Don't we teach each other something and separate how things are?[81]
>
> Her. Certainly.
>
> Soc. So a name is a an instrument for teaching and for separating being, just as the *kerkis* is an instrument for separating the web.

The main outline of this passage is clear. Socrates first proposes to give an account of the *kerkis* by giving an account of the act of *kerkizing* and claims that this can be done with instruments in general (388a10-b6). He then offers an account of the act of naming and uses this to determine what kind of instrument a name is (388b7-c2). Beyond this, however, the passage is very puzzling. The main problems of interpretation are how to understand (1) the account of the *kerkis* and the act of *kerkizing*; (2) the account of the name and the act of naming; (3) the relation between these two accounts; (4) the relation between Socrates' claims in this passage and Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names.

Traditionally, scholars have taken for granted that the words κερκίς and κερκίζειν in this passage should be translated as "shuttle" and "weaving".[82] Francesco Ademollo recently challenged this consensus, claiming that "the κερκίς has been identified as a pin-beater, i.e. a tool whose sharp tip was used to beat up the weft into place and to separate the warp threads from each other."[83] Ademollo thus suggests "pin-beater" and the catachrestic "pin-beating" as translations of κερκίς and κερκίζειν in this passage. The situation is more complicated, however. Elizabeth Barber, one of the scholars cited by Ademollo, writes:

> As Crowfoot (1936-37), Landercy (1933), and others have shown, the *kerkis* is undoubtedly a pin-beater. Among the Greeks the *kerkis* seems at least

[81] I discuss this translation and other possible translations later in this section.

[82] Méridier 1931; H. Fowler 1939; Reeve 1998. Dalimier 1998 translates κερκίς "navette" (just as Méridier before her), but translates κερκίζειν with the more specific "passer la trame" ("carrying the weft") instead of the more general "tisser" ("weaving").

[83] Ademollo 2011: 108.

> sometimes to have carried the weft on it (compare the English cognate *reel* 'device for winding thread onto'), thus functioning in the place of our shuttle, while the sharp tip was used to slip in between the warp threads and beat the weft into place, in this way functioning like our reed. These actions of hitting the weft home with a twang, and of running the tip of the pin-beater across the taut warp threads to free them from each other as the sheds are changed (cf. Plato, *Cratylus* 388-89; Landercy 1933) seem to be the situational center from which all else follows.[84]

There are three things to note about this passage. First, Barber qualifies the idenfication of the *kerkis* as a pin-beater by adding that the *kerkis* seems at least sometimes to have carried the weft on it. The reason for the careful phrasing "thus functioning in the place of our shuttle" is, as Barber explains elsewhere, that the ancient Greeks did not have shuttles.[85] They did of course use some implement to carry the weft, and, according to Barber, at least sometimes the *kerkis* ("pin-beater") performed this function. Second, Barber distinguishes between pin-beating as the primary function of the *kerkis* ("the situational centre from which all else follows") and carrying the weft as a plausible but only occassional secondary function. Third, Barber refers to our passage in the *Cratylus* as evidence for this distinction.

It is beyond the scope of this section to assess the complete textual and archaeological evidence relevant to a study of the term "*kerkis*" and the corresponding artefact(s). The present aim is only to examine the passage closely and to make the interpretative options explicit. As will become clear, none of these options is completely satisfactory, but I do hope to show that, when put under pressure, the passage serves as evidence against, rather than for, Barber's clear-cut distinction between a primary function (pin-beating) and an occassional secondary function (carrying the weft). More tentatively, I want to suggest that the passage could be taken as evidence for the view that the *kerkis* was generally assumed to be an instrument both for carrying the weft and for beating up the weft.

Let us begin by having another look at Socrates' description (388b1-2):

> ΣΩ. Κερκίζοντες δὲ τί δρῶμεν; οὐ τὴν κρόκην καὶ τοὺς στήμονας συγκεχυμένους διακρίνομεν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ναί.

[84] Barber 1991: 273-4.

[85] Barber 1991: 85 n. 3: "The true *shuttle* (the word is from the same root as Eng. *shoot*) is a smooth container, usually boat-shaped (cf. Gm. *Schiffchen*, Fr. *navette*, both meaning "shuttle" but literally "little-boat"), with a bobbin inside, that is so streamlined that it can be literally thrown or shot through the opened shed from one side of the loom to the other – a tremendous time-saver. The shuttle seems to have come to the Mediterranean world relatively late (certainly by the tenth century A.D., but not much earlier […]), perhaps with the horizontal treadle loom from the Orient."

> Soc. And when we *kerkize*, what do we do? Don't we separate the woof and the warp threads when they are entangled?
>
> Her. Yes.

If we do not presuppose any specific knowledge of *kerkizing*, the most straightforward construal of the Greek would seem to be that *kerkizing* consists in separating the woof and the warp when they (the woof and the warp) are entangled, thus taking συγκεχυμένους as characterizing the combined object τὴν κρόκην καὶ τοὺς στήμονας. This interpretation, though plausible on linguistic grounds, runs into the problem that Socrates' description does not correspond to any act of weaving. Beating up the weft involves separating the warp threads when they are entangled, but not separating *the woof and the warp* when they are entangled. On the contrary, beating up the weft is an act of *uniting* the woof and the warp into one single web. As regards carrying the weft, in ancient Greek weaving this act can be said to involve separating the woof and the warp because the weaver has to insert the weft manually (since the sheds do not separate the warp threads sufficiently to let the weaver simply shoot the weft between the warp). But carrying the weft cannot be said to involve separating the woof and the warp *when they are entangled*. The only way to make this interpretation work would be to take συγκεχυμένους as meaning "not (sufficiently) separated" instead of "entangled". This may not be impossible, but the usual meaning of the verb makes "entangled" a much more likely translation (cf. *LSJ* συγχέω I.1). Thus, on this construal of the Greek, Socrates' description does not correspond to beating up the weft, carrying the weft, or (as far as I can see) any other act of weaving.

This leaves us with four possible scenarios. The first possibility is that Socrates' description is inaccurate because (at the time of writing the *Cratylus*) Plato did not know or care about the details of weaving. Although it is an open question how much, in general, well-educated Athenian men knew about weaving, Plato clearly had a keen interest in, and extensive knowledge of, this craft, as can be seen from the extended analysis of weaving in the *Statesman* (279a-283a).

The second possibility is that Socrates' description is inaccurate because he (i.e. Plato's Socrates) does not know or care about the details of weaving. This also seems very unlikely, given Plato's consistent portrait of Socrates as someone who is extremely interested in, and informed about, all kinds of crafts.

The third possibility is that Socrates' description is inaccurate because he intends it to be inaccurate. Although Socrates elsewhere employs this strategy to test Hermogenes and challenge him to think critically (423b9-c10), the result in this case would only be to mislead him (since Hermogenes does not object and Socrates does not point out the mistake).[86] This seems an unlikely motive on Socrates' part if we keep in mind the general character of the conversation as a friendly and cooperative pursuit of the truth.

[86] In the later passage (423b9-c10), Socrates immediately points out the mistake.

The fourth possibility is that Socrates' description is accurate, but that we need to construe the Greek differently. A starting point for such an alternative interpretation could be the point made by Elizabeth Barber that ancient Greek weavers probably occasionally used the *kerkis*, not only to beat up the weft, but also to carry the weft. Let me suggest we make the stronger assumption that Greek weavers usually used the *kerkis* as an instrument for carrying the weft and beating up the weft. If we assume that Socrates and Hermogenes share this background knowledge, we might consider whether Socrates' account of *kerkizing* is supposed to cover both actions, and not just one of them. In that case, Socrates would expect Hermogenes to understand the account *both* as a description of the act of carrying the weft between the warp (thus taking τὴν κρόκην καὶ τοὺς στήμονας as a combined object of διακρίνομεν) *and* as a description of the act of beating up the weft (thus taking τοὺς στήμονας as an object of διακρίνομεν and συγκεχυμένους as only characterizing τοὺς στήμονας).

Although this interpretation requires a less straightforward construal of the Greek, we should, I believe, prefer this interpretation. The justification for this choice combines three considerations. First, on the initial construal, Socrates' description does not refer to any act of weaving. Second, since scholars already agree that the *kerkis* occasionally was used for carrying the weft, we might as well assume that Socrates and Hermogenes share the background knowledge that weavers usually use the same instrument for carrying the weft and beating up the weft. And third, Socrates can be assumed to expect Hermogenes to use this background knowledge to interpret Socrates' compressed description, especially when the more straightforward interpretation makes no sense in the context of ancient weaving practices.

After this archaeological digression, let us now consider how Socrates uses the account of the *kerkis* and the act of *kerkizing* to explain his account of the name and the act of naming. Here, again, is the relevant passage (388b7-c2):

> ΣΩ. Ἔχεις δὴ καὶ περὶ ὀνόματος οὕτως εἰπεῖν; ὀργάνῳ ὄντι τῷ ὀνόματι ὀνομάζοντες τί ποιοῦμεν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν.
>
> ΣΩ. Ἆρ' οὐ διδάσκομέν τι ἀλλήλους καὶ τὰ πράγματα διακρίνομεν ᾗ ἔχει;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.
>
> ΣΩ. Ὄνομα ἄρα διδασκαλικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον καὶ διακριτικὸν τῆς οὐσίας ὥσπερ κερκὶς ὑφάσματος.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ναί.

> Soc. So you're also able to answer this question about the name? When we name with the name, which is an instrument, what do we do?
>
> Her. I can't answer that question.
>
> Soc. Don't we teach each other something and separate how things are?

HER. Certainly.

SOC. So a name is an instrument for teaching and for separating being, just as the *kerkis* is an instrument for separating the web.

HER. Yes.

The procedure is the same as with the *kerkis*. Socrates first describes what is done with the name as an instrument and then uses this description to offer an account of the name as an instrument. We might think that, at least on a first reading, this account should be taken as a common sense account of ordinary name use, partly because Socrates explains the act of naming in terms of what we do in naming something, thereby presumably meaning people in general ([...] τί ποιοῦμεν; [...] Ἆρ' οὐ διδάσκομέν τι ἀλλήλους καὶ τὰ πράγματα διακρίνομεν ᾗ ἔχει;).[87] As I have tried to show above, however, Hermogenes is an experienced intellectual and a Socratic philosopher who not only would be able to understand a technical account, but would expect such an account. Indeed, as a Socratic, Hermogenes would expect Socrates to offer, not just any technical account, but a teleological account, i.e. an account which explains the name and the act of naming in terms of the highest good that the act of naming produces (and not in terms of what is ordinarily done or achieved in naming something).[88] Further, we should note that Socrates used the first person plural in his account of the act of *kerkizing* (Κερκίζοντες δὲ τί δρῶμεν; οὐ τὴν κρόκην καὶ τοὺς στήμονας συγκεχυμένους διακρίνομεν;), and that, in that passage, Socrates was clearly talking about expert weavers and not about people in general. Hence, it only seems natural to interpret the first person plurals in the present passage in the same way and to assume that Socrates is talking about expert teachers and not about people in general.

Let us consider it established that, already on the first reading, Socrates' account of the name and the act of naming is to be understood as a teleological account of expert name use. The next question is, how should we understand the two components of the account and their interrelation? Scholars broadly agree that the teaching component should be understood in terms of *the imparting of information*, either about ordinary objects (on the commonsensical reading) or about the characteristic/essential features of objects (on the technical reading).[89] Also, scholars agree that the separating component involves the notion of *distinguishing between things*, either between ordinary objects (on the commonsensical reading) or between kinds (on the technical reading).[90] Finally, concerning the relation between the two components, scholars agree that the separating component is meant to *elucidate or explain* the teaching component. In the words of David Sedley:

[87] Sedley 2003: 61.
[88] Cf. Socrates' famous autobiographical story in the *Phaedo* (95-102).
[89] Kretzmann 1971: 128; Denyer 1991: 76-79; Sedley 2003: 59-66; Ademollo 2011: 110-114.
[90] Kretzmann 1971: 128; Denyer 1991: 76-79; Sedley 2003: 59-66; Ademollo 2011: 110-114.

> There is no indication in what follows that instructing on the one hand, and separating being on the other, are two independent functions that a name has, and the Greek permits the preferable interpretation, often advocated, that it is *by* separating being that a name instructs.[91]

I begin by discussing the relation between the two components and then proceed to offer an interpretation of each component. I adopt this approach because I believe that a proper appreciation of each component is predicated upon a correct conception of the relation between the two components. This is where the account of the *kerkis* becomes central. If we assume that the two components of the account of the *kerkis* (i.e. weaving and *kerkizing*) stand in the same relation to each other as the two components of the account of the name (i.e. teaching and separating being), then we can use our understanding of the relation between weaving and *kerkizing* to understand the relation between teaching and separating being. Now, from the comparison between the name and the *kerkis* as instruments for separating (Ὄνομα ἄρα διδασκαλικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον καὶ διακριτικὸν τῆς οὐσίας ὥσπερ κερκὶς ὑφάσματος) and the subsequent comparison between the name as a teaching instrument and the *kerkis* as a weaving instrument (388c2: ΣΩ. Ὑφαντικὸν [sc. ὄργανον] δέ γε ἡ κερκίς; [...]), we can see that Socrates is assuming the following account of the *kerkis*: κερκὶς ὑφαντικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον καὶ διακριτικὸν ὑφάσματος.

Now, let us test Sedley's understanding of the relation between the two components of the account of the name by asking the two following questions about the account of the *kerkis*: Would it be correct to say that weaving and separating the web are not two independent functions which a *kerkis* has? And would it be correct to say that it is by separating the web that a *kerkis* weaves? Regarding the first question, I regard it as correct to say that weaving and separating the web are not two independent functions which a *kerkis* has, but only for the reason that weaving is the function of the *weaver* (while *kerkizing* is the function of the *kerkis*), not for the reason that weaving and separating the web are really one and the same function which a *kerkis* has, or that weaving and separating the web which a *kerkis* has. Regarding the second question, I regard it as incorrect to say that it is by separating the web that a *kerkis* weaves, because the weaver (and not the *kerkis*) is the one capable of weaving. More generally, it is incorrect to say that the separating component is meant to *elucidate or explain* the weaving component since the two components serve different purposes in the account. The weaving component relates the *kerkis* to a complex activity of which *kerkizing* is only one (necessary) part, while the separating component describes the specific function of the *kerkis* within the broader context of weaving. If we use this understanding of the account of the *kerkis* to understand the account of the name, it becomes clear that teaching is the function of the teacher (while separating being is the function of the name), and that the teacher (and not the name) is the one capable

[91] Sedley 2003: 60-61; Sedley here refers to Reeve 1998: 10; Ackrill 1997: 41-42; Barney 2001: 45.

of teaching. More generally, the separating component is not meant to *elucidate or explain* the teaching component because the two components serve different purposes in the account. The teaching component relates the name to a complex activity of which naming is only one (necessary) part, while the separating component describes the specific function of the name within this broader context of teaching.

Let us now proceed to offer an interpretation of each component. First, the teaching component. As mentioned above, scholars broadly agree that the teaching component should be understood in terms of the *imparting of information*, either about ordinary objects (on the commonsensical reading) or about the characteristic or essential features of objects (on the technical reading). These scholars seem to have overlooked the fact that the notion of imparting information is the polar opposite of the Socratic conception of teaching and education. In Book 7 of the *Republic*, Socrates introduces the image of the Cave as a way of describing his view of education and lack of education (514a1-2: παιδείας τε πέρι καὶ ἀπαιδευσίας.). In the subsequent exegesis (517a8-521b11), Socrates first explains to Glaucon that the ascent of the prisoner from the darkness of the cave to the sunny region above is intended as an image of the ascent of the soul from the visible realm to the realm of understanding (517a8-b6). Socrates then points out that, upon returning to the cave, the former prisoner cannot, at first, see things properly, because the soul (just like the eyes) needs time to adjust, not just to the change from darknesss to light, but also to the change from light to darkness. This observation leads Socrates to a further conclusion (518b7-d8):

> Δεῖ δή, εἶπον, ἡμᾶς τοιόνδε νομίσαι περὶ αὐτῶν, εἰ ταῦτ' ἀληθῆ· τὴν παιδείαν οὐχ οἵαν τινὲς ἐπαγγελλόμενοί φασιν εἶναι τοιαύτην καὶ εἶναι. φασὶ δέ που οὐκ ἐνούσης ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ἐπιστήμης σφεῖς ἐντιθέναι, οἷον τυφλοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ὄψιν ἐντιθέντες.
>
> Φασὶ γὰρ οὖν, ἔφη.
>
> Ὁ δέ γε νῦν λόγος, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, σημαίνει ταύτην τὴν ἐνοῦσαν ἑκάστου δύναμιν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ τὸ ὄργανον ᾧ καταμανθάνει ἕκαστος, οἷον εἰ ὄμμα μὴ δυνατὸν ἦν ἄλλως ἢ σὺν ὅλῳ τῷ σώματι στρέφειν πρὸς τὸ φανὸν ἐκ τοῦ σκοτώδους, οὕτω σὺν ὅλῃ τῇ ψυχῇ ἐκ τοῦ γιγνομένου περιακτέον εἶναι, ἕως ἂν εἰς τὸ ὂν καὶ τοῦ ὄντος τὸ φανότατον δυνατὴ γένηται ἀνασχέσθαι θεωμένη· τοῦτο δ' εἶναί φαμεν τἀγαθόν. ἦ γάρ;
>
> Ναί.
>
> Τούτου τοίνυν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, αὐτοῦ τέχνη ἂν εἴη, τῆς περιαγωγῆς, τίνα τρόπον ὡς ῥᾷστά τε καὶ ἀνυσιμώτατα μεταστραφήσεται, οὐ τοῦ ἐμποιῆσαι αὐτῷ τὸ ὁρᾶν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἔχοντι μὲν αὐτό, οὐκ ὀρθῶς δὲ τετραμμένῳ οὐδὲ βλέποντι οἷ ἔδει, τοῦτο διαμηχανήσασθαι.
>
> Ἔοικεν γάρ, ἔφη.

> 'Well,' I said, 'if it's true, there's one conclusion we can't avoid. Education is not what some people proclaim it to be. What they say, roughly

> speaking, is that they are able to put knowledge into souls where none was before. Like putting sight into eyes which were blind.'
>
> 'Yes, that is what they say.'
>
> 'Whereas our present account indicates that this capacity in every soul, this instrument by means of which each person learns, is like an eye which can only be turned away from the darkness and towards the light by turning the whole body. The entire soul has to turn with it, away from what is coming to be, until it is able to bear the sight of what is, and in particular the brightest part of it. This is the part we call the good, isn't it?'
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> 'Education, then,' I said, 'would be the art of directing this instrument, of finding the easiest and most effective way of turning it round. Not the art of putting the power of sight into it, but the art which assumes it possesses this power – albeit incorrectly aligned, and looking in the wrong direction – and contrives to make it look in the right direction.'
>
> 'Yes,' he said. 'It looks as if that is what education is.' (transl. T. Griffith)

If the notion of imparting information has anything to do with ancient Greek views of education and teaching, it should be compared to the view of education as *putting knowledge into the soul* of the learner which Socrates here contrasts with his own conception of education as a *turning of the soul* from the world of becoming to the world of being. But if this is correct, what is the connection between the Socratic notion of teaching and the account of the name in the *Cratylus*? As pointed out above, the similarity with the account of the *kerkis* suggests that naming (like *kerkizing*) is only a part of the complex act of teaching (like weaving). The most obvious way in which naming can be a part of teaching is that teaching is understood in terms of speaking since we already know that naming is a part of speaking (cf. 387c6-7: ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν τοῦ λέγειν μόριον τὸ ὀνομάζειν; ὀνομάζοντες γάρ που λέγουσι τοὺς λόγους. ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.). Given the teleological nature of Socrates' account, teaching should then be identified, not with speaking as such or with just any kind of speaking, but with the highest kind of speaking, which, from a Socratic perspective, no doubt is conversing (διαλέγεσθαι). This interpretation, as we shall see, squares well with the subsequent account of the use of names as consisting in *asking and answering questions* and the identification of the user of names as the dialectician (390c2-12).

How does the separating component fit into this picture? As mentioned above, scholars agree that the separating component involves the notion of *distinguishing between things*, either between ordinary objects (on the commonsensical reading) or between kinds (on the technical reading). More specifically, scholars agree that the separating component "should […] remind us of the conception of dialectic as the art of *dividing up reality* into its natural kinds".[92] I disagree with this interpretation for

[92] Ademollo 2011: 112.

the same reason I disagree with the view that the separating component is meant to *elucidate or explain* the teaching component. Like teaching, distinguishing between things and dividing up reality are the kinds of actions which are performed by the teacher (the speaker) *with* the name, not *by* the name (just as weaving is done by the weaver with the *kerkis*, not by the *kerkis*). What we should be looking for, I suggest, is an action which the name can be said to perform (as the *kerkis* can be said to separate the web). To begin looking for this action, I propose to focus on the analogy between the name and the *kerkis*. As we have already seen, the *kerkis* is an instrument for separating the web – an action which is part of the complex act of weaving. Now, the complex act of weaving, as analysed by the Visitor in the *Statesman* (279-283), is an intertwining of woof and warp (283b2: πλεκτικὴν εἶναι κρόκης καὶ στήμονος ὑφαντικήν). More generally, weaving is defined as a kind of combination (283a2-8):

> ΞΕ. Καὶ μὴν τό γε τῆς ὑφαντικῆς μέρος ὃ προυθέμεθα, παντί που δῆλον ἤδη. τὸ γὰρ συγκριτικῆς τῆς ἐν ταλασιουργίᾳ μόριον ὅταν εὐθυπλοκίᾳ κρόκης καὶ στήμονος ἀπεργάζηται πλέγμα, τὸ μὲν πλεχθὲν σύμπαν ἐσθῆτα ἐρεᾶν, τὴν δ' ἐπὶ τούτῳ τέχνην οὖσαν προσαγορεύομεν ὑφαντικήν.
>
> Visitor. And as for the part of weaving that we put forward for investigation, I suppose that's now clear to anyone. When the part of combination, that combination which is contained in wool-working, produces something intertwined, by the regular intertwining of woof and warp, the whole product of the intertwining we refer to as a piece of woollen clothing, and we refer to the expertise that is over this as weaving. (transl. C.J. Rowe)

How does the *kerkis* fit into this picture of weaving? A little earlier in the discussion, the Visitor refers to the different forms of expertise which concern the production of clothing as constituting one single expertise, namely wool-working (282a6-9). The Visitor then proposes to divide this expertise into two parts by means of the distinction between separation and combination (282b1-8). In the first part, we find "what has to do with carding, half of the expertise of *kerkizing*, and all those activities that set apart from each other things that are together" (282b-c).[93] In the second part, we find warp-spinning and, finally, weaving (282c-283a). This account raises two related problems. First, how should we understand the expression "half of the expertise of *kerkizing*" (τὸ τῆς κερκιστικῆς ἥμισυ)? And second, how should we understand the relation between the suggestion in the *Cratylus* that *kerkizing* is a part of weaving and the claim in the *Statesman* that (half of) *kerkizing* should be defined in contrast to, rather than as a part

[93] 282b4-5: Τὸ μὲν ξαντικὸν καὶ τὸ τῆς κερκιστικῆς ἥμισυ καὶ ὅσα τὰ συγκείμενα ἀπ' ἀλλήλων ἀφίστησι […] (transl. C.J. Rowe; revised).

of, weaving? We can find the answer to both questions, I want to suggest, by attending to our earlier observation that, in the *Cratylus*, the account of the *kerkis* describes *both* the function of carrying the weft between the warp *and* the function of beating up the weft. The fact that the *kerkis* has two different functions would explain why the Visitor can refer to "half of the expertise of *kerkizing*". But which of the two functions does he have in mind? Here is the description offered by the Visitor (282b10-c3):

> ΞΕ. Τῆς τοίνυν διακριτικῆς ἥ τε ξαντικὴ καὶ τὰ νυνδὴ ῥηθέντα ἅπαντά ἐστιν· ἡ γὰρ ἐν ἐρίοις τε καὶ στήμοσι διακριτική, κερκίδι μὲν ἄλλον τρόπον γιγνομένη, χερσὶ δὲ ἕτερον, ἔσχεν ὅσα ἀρτίως ὀνόματα ἐρρήθη.
>
> Visitor. Well then, it's to the art of separation that belong that of carding and all the things just mentioned; for separation in the case of wool and the warp, happening in one distinct way by means of a *kerkis*, in another by means of the hands, has acquired as many names as we referred to a moment ago. (transl. C.J. Rowe; revised)

The names in question are "carding" and "*kerkizing*" (cf. 282b4-8). And since carding is an act of separating the wool by means of the hands, it seems clear that the Visitor describes *kerkizing* as an act of separating the warp by means of the *kerkis*. In that case, the Visitor must have in mind the function of beating up the weft which involves separating the warp threads from each other. This suggests that the other half of the expertise of *kerkizing* – the one left out of the account – is the function of carrying the weft between the warp. The reason why the Visitor leaves this function out is, I believe, that carrying the weft is a part of weaving in a way that beating up the weft is not, and that including carrying the weft would complicate an already prolonged attempt to divide off weaving from the other kinds of wool-working. That is, while beating up the weft is only a part of weaving in the broad sense of weaving (the production of garments), carrying the weft is a part of weaving in the narrow sense of weaving (the intertwining of woof and warp). Thus, if the Visitor had included carrying the weft, he would have had to prolong the account in order to develop an adequate version of the distinction between separation and combination, i.e. a version which would explain how an act of separation (carrying the weft between the warp) can be an intrinsic part of an act of combination (the intertwining of woof and warp). And even though the Visitor is not averse to making digressions, this particular one would not serve to make any clearer his main point that just as the weaver cares for his fabric by intertwining the woof and the warp, so the statesman cares for the people in the city by intertwining, as it were, the woof and the warp of society.

What can this understanding of the relationship between *kerkizing* and weaving teach us about the account of the name as an instrument for separating being? Assuming that the relevant correlate to weaving is speaking (cf. the earlier remarks on λέγειν, διαλέγεσθαι, and διδάσκειν), the analogy suggests that naming is a part of speaking in

the same way *kerkizing* is a part of weaving. We can distinguish between two aspects of this analogy.

First, the analogy suggests that one kind of naming is a part of speaking in the broad sense of speaking, while another kind of naming is a part of speaking in the narrow sense of speaking. We can make sense of this suggestion if we understand speaking in the broad sense to be the production of speech and speaking in the narrow sense to be speaking a sentence (cf. the conception of weaving as the production of garments and as the intertwining of woof and warp). Thus, we can take the first kind of naming as the kind of name-giving and name-use that is not part of speaking a sentence and the second kind of naming as the kind of naming that *is* part of speaking a sentence (for the notion that speaking a sentence involves naming, cf. 387c6-7).

Second, the analogy suggests that the first kind of naming is an act of separation without a corresponding act of combination (cf. *kerkizing* as beating up the weft), and that the second kind of naming is an act of separation which is an intrinsic part of an act of combination (cf. *kerkizing* as carrying the weft). We can make sense of this suggestion if we understand speaking a sentence as an act of combination.[94] Thus, when we speak a sentence we combine things and at the same time separate them by naming them. In the case of weaving, the things combined and separated are the woof and the warp (together constituting the web). In the case of speaking a sentence, the things combined and separated must be beings in some sense since the name is an instrument for separating being. The picture suggested by the analogy, then, is that the name is an instrument for separating being in the sense that naming, at least in the context of speaking a sentence, is supposed to separate the beings which the sentence combines. How does this picture fit the description Socrates offers? Here, again, is the passage:

> ΣΩ. Ἔχεις δὴ καὶ περὶ ὀνόματος οὕτως εἰπεῖν; ὀργάνῳ ὄντι τῷ ὀνόματι ὀνομάζοντες τί ποιοῦμεν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν.
>
> ΣΩ. Ἆρ᾽ οὐ διδάσκομέν τι ἀλλήλους καὶ τὰ πράγματα διακρίνομεν ᾗ ἔχει;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.
>
> ΣΩ. Ὄνομα ἄρα διδασκαλικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον καὶ διακριτικὸν τῆς οὐσίας ὥσπερ κερκὶς ὑφάσματος.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ναί.

> Soc. So you're also able to answer this question about the name? When we name with the name, which is an instrument, what do we do?
>
> Her. I can't answer that question.

[94] Cf. the description of *logos* in Socrates' account of his dream in the *Theaetetus* (202b5-6): […] ὀνομάτων γὰρ συμπλοκὴν εἶναι λόγου οὐσίαν.

Soc. Don't we teach each other something and separate how things are?

Her. Certainly.

Soc. So a name is an instrument for teaching and for separating being, just as the kerkis is an instrument for separating the web.

Her. Yes.

It seems possible to interpret the second part of Socrates' question (Ἆρ' οὐ [...] τὰ πράγματα διακρίνομεν ᾗ ἔχει;) in two different ways. On the first interpretation, we construe τὰ πράγματα as the direct object of διακρίνομεν and ᾗ ἔχει as a modifying adverbial clause. This results in something like the following translation: "Don't we separate things with regard to how they are?". On this interpretation, Socrates uses the verb διακρίνειν in a way that is readily suggested by the analogy. That is, Socrates asks whether in using names (as part of speaking a sentence) we separate things, adding the words "with regard to how they are" (ᾗ ἔχει) in order to clarify that he does not mean that we separate things from each other in the world around us, but that we separate the beings of things from each other within the sentence itself.

On the second interpretation, we construe ᾗ ἔχει as the direct object of διακρίνομεν and τὰ πράγματα as a proleptic accusative. This results in something like the following translation: "Don't we separate how things are?". On this interpretation, Socrates uses διακρίνειν in a sense that is different from the one suggested by the analogy (where the distinction between separation and combination is central). Instead, Socrates uses the verb in some *representational* sense. That is, Socrates asks whether in using names (as part of speaking a sentence) we separate (i.e. represent) how things are. What does Socrates have in mind here? In Plato, the clause ᾗ ἔχει usually occurs as the direct object of verbs of saying and knowing.[95] However, since Socrates has already described naming as a part of speaking, he seems unlikely to regard the present notion of representing how things are as equivalent to the notion of saying how things are. What, then, is the connection? In my view, the idea seems to be that in naming something we represent the being of that thing, and that in saying something (i.e. in speaking a sentence) we represent the beings of two things in combination.[96]

On this view, the two interpretations supplement each other rather than exclude each other. That is, Socrates should be taken as building on the analogy with the *kerkis* and ascribing to the name the *syntactical* function of separating the beings of

[95] Cf. *Phd.* 73a; *Phdr.* 278c; *Resp.* 474b.

[96] We might consider pursuing an analogy between this *diacritical* (= representational) aspect of names and the *diacritical* (= representational) aspect of the senses as described by both Plato and Aristotle. In pursuing this analogy, we might do well to keep in mind what Myles Burnyeat says about perception in the *Republic* with specific reference to the passage in Book 7 (523a-525a) in which Socrates describes the senses as capable of κρίνεσθαι (Burnyeat 1999: 228): "Throughout the *Republic* perception is treated as a judgment-maker independent of reason, but much less reflective." Also relevant in this connection is the closely connected accounts of vision, speech, and hearing in the *Timaeus* (46e-47e).

things which the sentence combines. But he should also be taken as moving beyond the analogy with the *kerkis* and ascribing to the name the *representational* function of representing the being of something in separation which the sentence represents in combination with the being of something else.

### 1.3.2 Expert makers (388c3-389a4)

Having reached the account of the *kerkis* and the name by considering the acts of *kerkizing* and naming, Socrates reverses the procedure and characterizes the users and their actions in terms of the accounts of the instruments (388c3-8):

> ΣΩ. Ὑφαντικὸν δέ γε ἡ κερκίς;
> ΕΡΜ. Πῶς δ' οὔ;
> ΣΩ. Ὑφαντικὸς μὲν ἄρα κερκίδι καλῶς χρήσεται, καλῶς δ' ἐστὶν ὑφαντικῶς· διδασκαλικὸς δὲ ὀνόματι, καλῶς δ' ἐστὶ διδασκαλικῶς.
> ΕΡΜ. Ναί.
>
> Soc. But the *kerkis* is a weaving instrument?
> Her. Of course.
> Soc. Then it's the weaving expert who will use the *kerkis* well, and "well" means "in accordance with weaving expertise"; and it's the teaching expert who will use the name well, and "well" means "in accordance with teaching expertise".
> Her. Yes.

Socrates again uses the example of the *kerkis* as a way of leading Hermogenes to a similar view of the name. The argument proceeds in two stages. In the first stage, Socrates observes that the kerkis is a weaving instrument and uses this observation to conclude that only the weaving expert can use the *kerkis* well, and that "well" here means "in accordance with weaving expertise". In the second stage, Socrates draws on his observation that the name is a teaching instrument (cf. 388b13: Ὄνομα ἄρα διδασκαλικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον) and uses this observation to conclude that only the teaching expert can use the name well, and that "well" here means "in accordance with teaching expertise". Here, as before (cf. 387d10-388a9), the indirect form of argument allows Socrates to reach his conclusions, without stating the general principle which is supposed to support them. In this case, however, Socrates is clearly assuming the principle that an instrument of expertise can only be used well (i.e. in accordance with the relevant expertise) by the relevant expert. The line of reasoning is, then, that since the name is an instrument of teaching expertise, only the teaching expert can use it well, and "well" in this context means "in accordance with teaching expertise".

Why does Socrates make these points? And what does he mean by the expression "in accordance with teaching expertise" (διδασκαλικῶς)? It is possible that the first

point is simply aimed at the (likely common) view that the great majority of people can use names well. The more probable target, however, is Hermogenes' radical view that every individual is a measure of the correctness of their own use of names, which entails that, from this individualist point of view, everyone can use names well.

Socrates' second point ("well" in this context means "in accordance with the relevant expertise") is then naturally taken as a qualification of the first point. Recall that, in the discussion about the nature of actions (386e6-387d9), Socrates emphasized the distinction between performing an action naturally and failing to perform the action. Given this distinction, Socrates' first point ("only the teaching expert can use names well") could be taken to involve the radical suggestion that non-teaching experts (i.e. most people) fail to make use of names. Conscious of this possible misunderstanding, Socrates hastens to add that by "well" he means "in accordance with the relevant expertise", thus suggesting that using names badly does not entail failing to use names, but only failing to use names *in accordance with teaching expertise*. That is, Socrates' present distinction between using an instrument well (i.e. in accordance with the relevant expertise) and using an instrument badly (i.e. not in accordance with the relevant expertise) is not identical with, but builds on, the earlier distinction between performing an action naturally and simply failing to perform the action. Someone may succeed in performing an action naturally and still fail to perform the action in accordance with the relevant expertise. In fact, when it comes to the use of names, that is the case for most people.

Socrates now proceeds to make very similar points about the maker of names and name-making (388c9-389a4):

> ΣΩ. Τῷ τίνος οὖν ἔργῳ ὁ ὑφάντης καλῶς χρήσεται ὅταν τῇ κερκίδι χρῆται;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Τῷ τοῦ τέκτονος.
>
> ΣΩ. Πᾶς δὲ τέκτων ἢ ὁ τὴν τέχνην ἔχων;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ὁ τὴν τέχνην.
>
> ΣΩ. Τῷ τίνος δὲ ἔργῳ ὁ τρυπητὴς καλῶς χρήσεται ὅταν τῷ τρυπάνῳ χρῆται;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Τῷ τοῦ χαλκέως.
>
> ΣΩ. Ἆρ' οὖν πᾶς χαλκεὺς ἢ ὁ τὴν τέχνην ἔχων;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ὁ τὴν τέχνην.
>
> ΣΩ. Εἶεν. τῷ δὲ τίνος ἔργῳ ὁ διδασκαλικὸς χρήσεται ὅταν τῷ ὀνόματι χρῆται;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οὐδὲ τοῦτ' ἔχω.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐδὲ τοῦτό γ' ἔχεις εἰπεῖν, τίς παραδίδωσιν ἡμῖν τὰ ὀνόματα οἷς χρώμεθα;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οὐ δῆτα.
>
> ΣΩ. Ἆρ' οὐχὶ ὁ νόμος δοκεῖ σοι ὁ παραδιδοὺς αὐτά;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔοικεν.

ΣΩ. Νομοθέτου ἄρα ἔργῳ χρήσεται ὁ διδασκαλικὸς ὅταν ὀνόματι χρῆται;

ΕΡΜ. Δοκεῖ μοι.

ΣΩ. Νομοθέτης δέ σοι δοκεῖ πᾶς εἶναι ἀνὴρ ἢ ὁ τὴν τέχνην ἔχων;

ΕΡΜ. Ὁ τὴν τέχνην.

ΣΩ. Οὐκ ἄρα παντὸς ἀνδρός, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, ὄνομα θέσθαι ἀλλά τινος ὀνοματουργοῦ· οὗτος δ' ἐστίν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὁ νομοθέτης, ὃς δὴ τῶν δημιουργῶν σπανιώτατος ἐν ἀνθρώποις γίγνεται.

ΕΡΜ. Ἔοικεν.

Soc. Well, whose product will the weaver use well when he uses the *kerkis*?

Her. The carpenter's.

Soc. And is everyone a carpenter or the one who has the expertise?

Her. The one who has the expertise.

Soc. And whose product does the driller use well when he uses the drill?

Her. The smith's.

Soc. Is everyone then a smith or the one who has the expertise?

Her. The one who has the expertise.

Soc. Very well. But whose product will the teaching expert use when he uses the name?

Her. I can't answer that question either.

Soc. Can't you even answer this question: Who hands down to us the names we use?

Her. I certainly can't.

Soc. Don't you think it's *nomos* which hands down the names?

Her. It looks like it.

Soc. So it's the *nomothetes'* product which the teaching expert will use when he uses the name?

Her. I think so.

Soc. Do you think everyone is a *nomothetes*, or the one who has the expertise?

Her. The one who has the expertise.

Soc. You see, Hermogenes, giving a name isn't the task of everyone, but of the "name-maker". And this person is, it seems, the *nomothetes* who certainly is the rarest of craftsmen among humans.

Her. It looks like it.

Once again, the examples of the *kerkis* and the drill are used by Socrates to lead Hermogenes to a similar view of the name. The argument proceeds in three main stages. First, Socrates and Hermogenes agree that the weaver (or the driller), when using the

*kerkis* (or the drill), uses the product of the carpenter (or the smith) well, and that the carpenter (or the smith) has the expertise of carpentry (or blacksmithing) which is not shared by everyone (388c9-d5). Second, Socrates shows Hermogenes that the teacher, when using the name, uses the product of the *nomothetes* (well); and Socrates and Hermogenes agree that the *nomothetes* has the expertise of *nomothesia* which is not shared by everyone (388d6-e6). Third, Socrates points out to Hermogenes that name-giving is therefore the task of the "name-maker" (and not of everyone), and that this name-maker is the (extremely rare) *nomothetes* (388e7-389a4).

As mentioned earlier, scholars have traditionally had very different views about the account of the *nomothetes* in the present passage. Is the account historical or atemporal? And does it describe the *nomothetes* as a mythical personification or as a real expert?[97] Paul Friedländer, for instance, regards the *nomothetes* as a mythical personification and the account as (somewhat) historical.[98] Around the middle of the 20th century, Richard Robinson positioned himself within this traditional debate, claiming that "the Cratylus has nothing to say on the origin of names",[99] and that the "lawmaker" (i.e. the *nomothetes*) "is there not as a piece of history but as a mythical device to make it easier to develop an abstract theory."[100] He continued:

> This lawmaker is as much a myth to Plato as the Adam who gave names to creatures is a myth to modernist Christians. He is like the point-particle we imagine in order to work out Newton's laws of motion. He is like the constructor of the material world in the *Timaeus*, posited to explain better the nature of a world that never was construced because it has always existed.[101]

Robinson was followed by, among others, Norman Kretzmann and John Ackrill.[102] But more recent interpreters such as David Sedley and Francesco Ademollo have tried to find a middle ground between the view of the account as purported history and Robinson's view of the account as an atemporal and impersonal theory. According to Sedley (and Ademollo who seems to be in broad agreement with Sedley), the account of the

[97] Goldschmidt 1940: 61-67.

[98] Friedländer 1957: 187: "Dem wortprägenden Gesetzgeber des *Kratylos* aber antwortet über Jahrzehnte platonischen Denkens hinweg der Demiurg des *Timaios*; Mythologeme über ein Werden, von dem man kein Wissen haben kann, aber dazu bestimmt, die Erscheinung auf jenes Sein zu beziehen, dem die Erkenntnis letzlich zugewandt ist."

[99] R. Robinson 1969b: 106.

[100] R. Robinson 1969b: 105.

[101] R. Robinson 1969b: 105-106.

[102] Kretzmann 1971: 129: "And if we demythologize the theory we find behind the device [i.e. the *nomothetes*] nothing so simple as Solon or Peisistratus, but something like the interacting combination of good English usage and the Oxford English Dictionary"). Ackrill 1997: 42: "[…] the real questions are not in any way historical, but are: what are the criteria for being a name (or a good name); and what (therefore) are the natural limitations or conditions upon word introduction (requirements for becoming a name)".

*nomothetes* is intended as an account of name-makers of all periods, and since the account makes reference, not just to the earliest name-makers in human history, but also to the contemporary people who succeed in bringing neologisms into circulation, we can be sure that Socrates is not talking about legislators in the literal (i.e political) sense of the word, but only about *linguistic* legislators in some metaphorical sense of the word.[103] Sedley further suggests that, in making use of the notion of a linguistic legislator, Socrates is likely borrowing an idea which is "a product of the fifth-century etymological industry, a large-scale Sophistic enterprise of which Plato's *Cratylus* is no more than a faint echo."[104]

In the face of this variety of interpretations, let me introduce two general considerations which can help us recognize the outline of the correct reading.[105] First, the present account of the *nomothetes* does not stand alone, but occurs in conjunction with the accounts of the carpenter and the smith (the other expert makers) as well as the accounts of the teacher and the weaver (the expert users). Therefore, we should make this immediate context an important guide in constructing and evaluating interpretations of the account of the *nomothetes*. Second, the other passages in the *Cratylus* mentioning *nomothetai* or name-givers (collected by Sedley and Ademollo) do not occur in conjunction with the present account of the *nomothetes*. Therefore, we should, at least in the first instance, keep separate the interpretation of the present account and the interpretation of the other passages.

These considerations may seem obvious, but the fact is that, despite Goldschmidt's warnings, almost all existing interpretations have treated the account of the *nomothetes* in isolation from its immediate context and/or have made the later references to *nomothetai* or name-givers an important guide in constructing and evaluating interpretations of the account.[106] If we regard the existing interpretations in the light of these considerations, we see that (with one exception) they have no *a priori* plausibility.

The accounts of the other experts attempt to explain some feature of the relevant expert, but do so without making reference to individual practioners (whether historical or contemporary). This fact makes it *a priori* unlikely that the account of the *nomothetes* is a historical account of the origin of language (the traditional view), or that the account makes reference to individual practitioners, whether they are the earliest name-makers in human history or contemporary people who succeed in bringing neologisms into circulation (Sedley's and Ademollo's view). And even if later passages refer to *nomothetai* or name-givers as (historical or contemporary) individuals, that does not make the present passage about (historical or contemporary) individuals. By the same token (and this is the exception), Robinson's view that the present

[103] Sedley 2003: 68-69.
[104] Sedley 2003: 70; Crivelli 2008: 225.
[105] Since first drafting this section, I have learned that these two considerations were already introduced by Goldschmidt 1940: 64-65.
[106] R. Robinson 1969b: 104-106; Sedley 2003: 66-74; Ademollo 2011: 118-125.

account of the *nomothetes* is essentially atemporal has a priori plausibility, even if his view that all descriptions of *nomothetai* or name-givers in the Cratylus are essentially atemporal is *prima facie* incorrect. Further, the accounts of the other experts describe the relevant expert in general and abstract terms, but do so without treating the expert as merely a convenient way of describing something purely impersonal. This fact makes it *a priori* unlikely that the account of the *nomothetes* is merely a convenient way of describing something purely impersonal (Robinson's view). And even if later passages refer to name-giving in impersonal terms (e.g. 416b-d), that does not make the *nomothetes* in the present passage impersonal.

After this general indication of the *a priori* implausibility of the existing interpretations, let me now offer my view on what, given the immediate context, is an *a priori* plausible interpretation. Earlier in this section, we saw that Socrates, in the brief treatment of expert users (388c3-8), assumed the principle that an instrument of *expertise* can only be used well by the relevant expert, but at the same time seemed to suggest that failing to use the instrument well does not entail failing to use the instrument, but only failing to use the instrument *in accordance with the relevant expertise*, whereby Socrates avoided making the extreme claim that people who are not teaching experts (i.e. most people) cannot use names. Socrates continues this line of thought in the following passage about expert makers (388c9-d5):

ΣΩ. Τῷ τίνος οὖν ἔργῳ ὁ ὑφάντης καλῶς χρήσεται ὅταν τῇ κερκίδι χρῆται;
ΕΡΜ. Τῷ τοῦ τέκτονος.
ΣΩ. Πᾶς δὲ τέκτων ἢ ὁ τὴν τέχνην ἔχων;
ΕΡΜ. Ὁ τὴν τέχνην.
ΣΩ. Τῷ τίνος δὲ ἔργῳ ὁ τρυπητὴς καλῶς χρήσεται ὅταν τῷ τρυπάνῳ χρῆται;
ΕΡΜ. Τῷ τοῦ χαλκέως.
ΣΩ. Ἆρ' οὖν πᾶς χαλκεὺς ἢ ὁ τὴν τέχνην ἔχων;
ΕΡΜ. Ὁ τὴν τέχνην.

Soc. Well, whose product will the weaver use well when he uses the *kerkis*?
Her. The carpenter's.
Soc. And is everyone a carpenter or the one who has the expertise?
Her. The one who has the expertise.
Soc. And whose product does the driller use well when he uses the drill?
Her. The smith's.
Soc. Is everyone then a smith or the one who has the expertise?
Her. The one who has the expertise.

As in the previous passage, Socrates emphasises the distinction between the expert (in this case the expert maker) and everyone else (e.g. ΣΩ. Πᾶς δὲ τέκτων ἢ ὁ τὴν τέχνην ἔχων; ΕΡΜ. Ὁ τὴν τέχνην. cf. 388c5-7: Ὑφαντικὸς μὲν ἄρα [...]· διδασκαλικὸς δὲ [...]). But, as in the previous passage, he is also careful to point out that he is describing the best possible scenario, thereby indicating that he is not denying the possibility of other less optimal scenarios (Τῷ τίνος οὖν ἔργῳ ὁ ὑφάντης **καλῶς** χρήσεται ὅταν τῇ κερκίδι χρῆται; cf. 388c6: καλῶς δ' ἐστὶν ὑφαντικῶς). That is, Socrates suggests the nuanced principle that *an expert's good use* of an instrument of expertise depends on expert production of the instrument, but he does not suggest the less nuanced principle that the use of an instrument of expertise depends on expert production of the instrument. Given this interpretation of the immediate context, it seems *a priori* plausible that, in his treatment of the name-maker, Socrates will emphasize the distinction between the expert name-maker and everyone else and describe the best possible scenario, while being careful to allow for the possibility of other less optimal scenarios. Here is the passage again (388d6-389a4):

> ΣΩ. Εἶεν. τῷ δὲ τίνος ἔργῳ ὁ διδασκαλικὸς χρήσεται ὅταν τῷ ὀνόματι χρῆται;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οὐδὲ τοῦτ' ἔχω.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐδὲ τοῦτό γ' ἔχεις εἰπεῖν, τίς παραδίδωσιν ἡμῖν τὰ ὀνόματα οἷς χρώμεθα;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οὐ δῆτα.
>
> ΣΩ. Ἆρ' οὐχὶ ὁ νόμος δοκεῖ σοι ὁ παραδιδοὺς αὐτά;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔοικεν.
>
> ΣΩ. Νομοθέτου ἄρα ἔργῳ χρήσεται ὁ διδασκαλικὸς ὅταν ὀνόματι χρῆται;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Δοκεῖ μοι.
>
> ΣΩ. Νομοθέτης δέ σοι δοκεῖ πᾶς εἶναι ἀνὴρ ἢ ὁ τὴν τέχνην ἔχων;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ὁ τὴν τέχνην.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐκ ἄρα παντὸς ἀνδρός, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, ὄνομα θέσθαι ἀλλά τινος ὀνοματουργοῦ· οὗτος δ' ἐστίν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὁ νομοθέτης, ὃς δὴ τῶν δημιουργῶν σπανιώτατος ἐν ἀνθρώποις γίγνεται.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔοικεν.

> Soc. Very well. But whose product will the teaching expert use when he uses the name?
>
> Her. I can't answer that question either.
>
> Soc. Can't you even answer this question: Who hands down to us the names we use?
>
> Her. I certainly can't.
>
> Soc. Don't you think it's *nomos* which hands down the names?
>
> Her. It looks like it.

Soc. So it's the *nomothetes'* product which the teaching expert will use when he uses the name?

Her. I think so.

Soc. Do you think everyone is a *nomothetes*, or the one who has the expertise?

Her. The one who has the expertise.

Soc. You see, Hermogenes, giving a name isn't the task of everyone, but of the "name-maker". And this person is, it seems, the *nomothetes* who certainly is the rarest of craftsmen among humans.

Her. It looks like it.

The basic procedure is the same as in the preceding passage. First, Socrates shows Hermogenes that the teaching expert, when using the name, uses the product of the *nomothetes* (ΣΩ. Εἶεν. τῷ δὲ τίνος ἔργῳ ὁ διδασκαλικὸς χρήσεται ὅταν τῷ ὀνόματι χρῆται; [...] ΣΩ. Νομοθέτου ἄρα ἔργῳ χρήσεται ὁ διδασκαλικὸς ὅταν ὀνόματι χρῆται; ΕΡΜ. Δοκεῖ μοι.). Next, Socrates and Hermogenes agree that the *nomothetes* has the expertise of *nomothesia* which is not shared by everyone (ΣΩ. Νομοθέτης δέ σοι δοκεῖ πᾶς εἶναι ἀνὴρ ἢ ὁ τὴν τέχνην ἔχων; ΕΡΜ. Ὁ τὴν τέχνην.). As expected, then, Socrates emphasises the distinction between the expert name-maker and everyone else. Also as expected, Socrates describes the best possible scenario, while being careful to allow for other less optimal scenarios. Although Socrates does not explicitly modify χρήσεται with καλῶς (as he did in the preceding passage), the conclusion that name-giving is the task of the expert name-maker (Οὐκ ἄρα παντὸς ἀνδρός, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, ὄνομα θέσθαι ἀλλά τινος ὀνοματουργοῦ) is only about who should give names, not about who can give names. Thus, Socrates is careful not to claim that only an expert name-maker can make names (just as he was careful not to claim that only the teaching expert can use names).

The only surprising element of the passage, then, is the digression identifying *nomos* as what transmits names and the *nomothetes* as the expert name-maker (ΣΩ. Εἶεν. τῷ δὲ τίνος ἔργῳ ὁ διδασκαλικὸς χρήσεται ὅταν τῷ ὀνόματι χρῆται; [...] ΕΡΜ. Ὁ τὴν τέχνην.).[107] Genuinely puzzled by the introduction of the *nomothetes*, scholars have supposed that Socrates here introduces the idea of a special kind of linguistic legislator – an idea which he either invents *ad hoc*[108] or borrows from the tradition.[109] What I want to suggest, however, is that, rather than inventing or borrowing some idea of a special linguistic legislator, Socrates draws on his own conception of the

[107] It should not surprise us that Socrates swiftly infers that the teaching expert will use the product of the *nomothetes* from the claim that *nomos* is what transmits names. It is both a traditional Greek view and a Socratic view that the *nomos* of existing societies such as the Spartan or Athenian societies (and the *nomos* of any society, whether existing or non-existing) is made by one or more *nomothetai*, for instance Lykourgos in the case of Sparta or Solon in the case of Athens; cf. *Resp.* 599c-e.

[108] R. Robinson 1969b: 104-106.

[109] Goldschmidt 1940: 64-67; Baxter 1992: 134-138; Sedley 2003: 66-74; Ademollo 2011: 121-125.

*nomothetes* (familiar from the *Republic*) as the person ultimately responsible for the *nomos* (i.e. the custom) of a whole culture, including its use of names. In the *Republic*, Socrates and the two brothers, acting as *nomothetai*, focus on the cultural education of the guards, since education is what shapes the character of people, and the ruling class is what shapes the character of the city. Thus, according to Socrates in the *Republic*, the *nomos* of a society defines the cultural environment and the cultural practices which educate the ruling class and shape the character of the population as a whole. As described in Books 2 to 4 of the *Republic*, the central element of the *nomos* of a society is the physical and musical education of its rulers. Although this is not made explicit in Books 2 to 4, Socrates seems likely to conceive of names as part of this cultural education, as we shall see in the next chapter. What *is* made explicit in the *Republic*, however, is that, as imagined *nomothetai* of the good society, Socrates and the brothers feel compelled to institute a *nomos* about how the citizens should use names in talking about themselves and the society as a whole. In Book 5 (461e-466d), Socrates explains why they as *nomothetai* of the good city should institute a new use of the possessive pronouns ("mine" and "ours") and a new use of the names of family members ("father", "mother", "son", "daughter"), because this new use of names contributes to producing "the community of pleasure and pain" (ἡ μὲν ἡδονῆς τε καὶ λύπης κοινωνία) which in turn contributes to realizing the greatest good at which the *nomothetes* aims when making *nomoi*: unity and cohesion in the city.

A careful reading of the digression confirms that this conception of the *nomothetes* is what Socrates has in mind in the present passage. When Socrates answers his own question ([…] τίς παραδίδωσιν ἡμῖν τὰ ὀνόματα οἷς χρώμεθα;) by suggesting that it is *nomos* which hands down names (Ἆρ' οὐχὶ ὁ νόμος δοκεῖ σοι ὁ παραδιδοὺς αὐτά;), Socrates is naturally taken to refer to *nomos* in its usual sense ("tradition", "custom") and not in some special linguistic sense. In consequence, the *nomothetes*, being the giver of this tradition or custom, is not a special linguistic legislator but a *nomothetes* in a general sense: a custom-giver. Further, when Socrates and Hermogenes agree that the *nomothetes* possesses expertise (ΣΩ. Νομοθέτης δέ σοι δοκεῖ πᾶς εἶναι ἀνὴρ ἢ ὁ τὴν τέχνην ἔχων; ΕΡΜ. Ὁ τὴν τέχνην.), Socrates must have in mind his own conception of the *nomothetes*, since, on any other conception, he would regard the *nomothetes* as falling short of having expertise. Finally, all this fits nicely with Socrates' concluding description of the *nomothetes* as the rarest of craftsmen among humans ([…] οὗτος δ' ἐστίν, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὁ νομοθέτης, ὃς δὴ τῶν δημιουργῶν σπανιώτατος ἐν ἀνθρώποις γίγνεται).

Finally, let us consider the relation between Socrates' two main claims in this section and Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names. In the first subsection (387d10-388c2), Socrates puts forward the account of the name as an instrument for teaching (and for separating being) and thereby claims that name use (considered as a part of speaking and teaching) is an expert action. This development may seem to forebode problems for Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names, but nothing in this passage indicates that Socrates takes himself to have shown that Hermogenes'

position cannot be right, and that there must be a natural correctness of names. On the contrary, rather than pause to comment on the relation between the account of the name as an instrument and Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names, Socrates immediately moves on to the next stage in the argument (388c3: Ὑφαντικὸν δέ γε ἡ κερκίς;), thereby indicating that the account of the name as an instrument is merely meant *to prepare the ground* for the following argument. Socrates is right to do so, since nothing he has said so far is specific enough to go against Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names. At this point in the discussion, Hermogenes can grant, on the one hand, that the name is an instrument for naming (and for separating being), and that name use therefore is an expert action, and still maintain, on the other hand, that any person is allowed to call any given thing a different name which this person has given to this thing.

In the second subsection (388c3-389a4), Socrates puts forward the account of the *nomothetes* as the expert name-maker and thereby claims that name-giving (considered as a part of custom-giving) is an expert action. At this point, for the first time, Socrates himself indicates that he takes himself to have shown that Hermogenes' position cannot be right (388e7-389a1: Οὐκ ἄρα παντὸς ἀνδρός, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, ὄνομα θέσθαι, ἀλλά τινος ὀνοματουργοῦ [...]). Socrates is right to do so, since Hermogenes cannot grant, on the one hand, that name-giving is an expert action, and still maintain, on the other hand, that any person is allowed to call any given thing a different name which this person has given to this thing.

## 1.4 Expert name-making and expert supervision (389a5-390e5)

Having made Hermogenes agree that name-giving is only the task of the expert name-maker (who is a custom-giver) (387d10-389a4), Socrates goes on to show that the correctness of a name (like any product of expertise) depends on the form (and not the matter) of the name (389a5-390a10), and that it is the custom-giver's task to make a name while having the dialectician as supervisor, if he is to give names well (390d5-8).

In the previous section, I aimed to show that, if we keep in mind Hermogenes' Socratic character and Socrates' special strategy for dealing with a Socratic such as Hermogenes, we get a very different, and much more Socratic, understanding of Socrates' account of natural correctness. In this section, I aim to show that, if we keep in mind the very Socratic nature of Socrates' account of natural correctness, we get strong confirmation of our interpretation of Hermogenes as an experienced Socratic philosopher. More specifically, unless we grant that Hermogenes has the character of an experienced Socratic, we cannot make sense of Socrates' account of the expertise of name-making which is supposed to support his claim that the correctness of a name (like any product of expertise) depends on the form (and not the matter) of the name. Further, unless we grant that Hermogenes has the character of an experienced So-

cratic, we cannot make sense of Socrates' account of the role of the expert user which is supposed to support his claim that the proper judge of the correctness of names is the dialectian and not the custom-giver.

Also, in this section I aim to show that Socrates puts forward both his main claims - that the correctness of a name depends on the form (and not the matter) of the name, and that the proper judge of the correctness of names is the dialectian and not the the custom-giver - as further evidence against Hermogenes' specific views about the correctness of names and the general view that agreement, and not nature, determines the correctness of names.

### 1.4.1 Expert name-making (389a5-390a10)

Having shown that name-giving is only the task of the expert name-maker (who is a custom-giver), Socrates begins the next line of argument by asking Hermogenes to consider "to what place" (ποῖ) the custom-giver looks when he gives names (389a5-6: Ἴθι δή, ἐπίσκεψαι ποῖ βλέπων ὁ νομοθέτης τὰ ὀνόματα τίθεται). Socrates proposes that they consider the question on the basis of the preceding line of argument (389a6: ἐκ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν δὲ ἀνάσκεψαι). Thus, returning to the analogy between the carpenter and the custom-giver (cf. 388c9-13), Socrates asks Hermogenes to what place the carpenter looks when he makes the *kerkis* (389a6-7: ποῖ βλέπων ὁ τέκτων τὴν κερκίδα ποιεῖ;). Before Hermogenes can answer the question, Socrates himself proposes (and Hermogenes agrees) that the carpenter looks to the kind of thing which is naturally fit to *kerkize* (389a7-8: ΣΩ. […] ἆρ' οὐ πρὸς τοιοῦτόν τι ὃ ἐπεφύκει κερκίζειν; ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.).

Socrates then develops his account of the carpenter (389b1-389d3). First, Socrates asks Hermogenes to what place the carpenter looks if the *kerkis* breaks as he makes it. Does the carpenter make another *kerkis* by looking to the broken *kerkis* or by looking "to that form to which he looked when he made the *kerkis* which he broke?" (389b2-3: […] ἢ πρὸς ἐκεῖνο τὸ εἶδος πρὸς ὅπερ καὶ ἣν κατέαξεν ἐποίει;). Hermogenes replies that he makes the new *kerkis* by looking to the form (389b4), and he agrees that they would be completely right in calling this form "the thing itself which a *kerkis* is" (389b5: ΣΩ. […] αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστιν κερκὶς […] ΕΡΜ. Ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ.).

Second, Socrates asks Hermogenes to consider the carpenter's tasks when he makes a *kerkis* for clothes of different quality (e.g. heavy or light clothes, or clothes made of linen or wool) (389b8-9). On the one hand, the carpenter must make sure that all these *kerkides* have the form of the *kerkis* (389b9-10). On the other hand, the carpenter must render into any given product (i.e. any given *kerkis*) the nature which is best for any given thing (i.e. for any given cloth) (389b9-c1: […] πάσας μὲν δεῖ τὸ τῆς κερκίδος ἔχειν εἶδος, οἵα δ' ἑκάστῳ καλλίστη ἐπεφύκει, ταύτην ἀποδιδόναι τὴν φύσιν εἰς τὸ ἔργον ἕκαστον;).

Having made this point about the *kerkis*, Socrates makes the general claim that the same applies to other instruments (389c3: Καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων δὴ ὀργάνων ὁ αὐτὸς

τρόπος). In general, the expert producer must find the instrument which is naturally fit for a given thing and render it into whatever he is making it of – not however he wants, but the way it is natural (389c4-6: τὸ φύσει ἑκάστῳ πεφυκὸς ὄργανον ἐξευρόντα δεῖ ἀποδοῦναι εἰς ἐκεῖνο ἐξ οὗ ἂν ποιῇ, οὐχ οἷον ἂν αὐτὸς βουληθῇ, ἀλλ' οἷον ἐπεφύκει). A blacksmith, for example, must know how to put into iron the drill which is naturally fit for a given thing (389c6-8: τὸ φύσει γὰρ ἑκάστῳ, ὡς ἔοικε, τρύπανον πεφυκὸς εἰς τὸν σίδηρον δεῖ ἐπίστασθαι τιθέναι). In the same way, the carpenter must know how to put into wood the *kerkis* which is naturally fit for a given thing (Καὶ τὴν φύσει κερκίδα ἑκάστῳ πεφυκυῖαν εἰς ξύλον). The reason, Socrates explains (referring back to 389b8-c1), is that there is a given *kerkis* for a given kind of web; and so on for the other instruments (389d1-2: Φύσει γὰρ ἦν ἑκάστῳ εἴδει ὑφάσματος, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἑκάστη κερκίς, καὶ τἆλλα οὕτως).

Having developed this account of the carpenter and the *kerkis*, Socrates turns to the custom-giver and the name (389d4-390a10). First, Socrates asks Hermogenes if (analogously to the carpenter) the custom-giver must know how to put into sounds and syllables the name which is naturally fit for a given thing, and that if he is to be an authoritative giver of names, he must make and give all names by looking to the thing itself which a name is (389d4-8). Second, expanding the analogy between the custom-giver and other expert producers (in this case the blacksmith), Socrates assures Hermogenes that if any given custom-giver does not put the name which is naturally fit for a given thing into the same syllables, there is no need to be doubtful about this (389d8-e1). For, Socrates points out, neither does every blacksmith put things into the same iron, even when he makes the same instrument for the same purpose. And yet – as long as he renders the same form, whether in the same or in different iron, – the instrument is still correct, whether someone makes it here or among barbarians (389e1-390a3). Hermogenes agrees, and Socrates continues (390a5-10):

> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν οὕτως ἀξιώσεις καὶ τὸν νομοθέτην τόν τε ἐνθάδε καὶ τὸν ἐν τοῖς βαρβάροις, ἕως ἂν τὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος εἶδος ἀποδιδῷ τὸ προσῆκον ἑκάστῳ ἐν ὁποιαισοῦν συλλαβαῖς, οὐδὲν χείρω νομοθέτην εἶναι τὸν ἐνθάδε ἢ τὸν ὁπουοῦν ἄλλοθι;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ γε.

> Soc. So, following this line of reasoning, will you claim that this also applies to the custom-giver, both the one here and the one among barbarians – that as long as he renders, in some syllables regardless of what kind, the form of the name which is appropriate to a given thing, the custom-giver here is no worse than the one anywhere else?
>
> Her. Certainly.

In this subsection, Socrates develops the account of the carpenter (and the blacksmith) in order to lead Hermogenes from a few examples to a general view about (the expert production of) instruments (389a5-389d3). Having led Hermogenes to this general

view, Socrates develops a corresponding account of the expert production of names and concludes that as long as a Greek custom-giver renders, in some syllables regardless of what kind, the form of the name which is appropriate to a given thing, the Greek custom-giver is no worse than the one anywhere else (389d4-390a10).

As scholars have noted, Socrates uses some very technical - and very Socratic - phrases and notions in his account of carpentry and in his account of productive expertise in general.[110] First, Socrates describes carpentry - and expert production in general - as involving the process of "looking to something" (πρός τι βλέπειν).[111] Second, having proposed that the carpenter looks to "the kind of thing which is naturally fit to *kerkize*" (πρὸς τοιοῦτόν τι ὃ ἐπεφύκει κερκίζειν), Socrates takes for granted that Hermogenes agrees that this is the "form" of the *kerkis* (τὸ εἶδος)[112] and asks Hermogenes to confirm that they would be completely right in calling this form "the thing itself which a *kerkis* is" (389b5: αὐτὸ ὃ ἔστιν κερκὶς).[113] Third, having made the general point that any expert producer of an instrument must find "the instrument which is naturally fit for a given thing" (τὸ φύσει ἑκάστῳ πεφυκὸς ὄργανον) and "render it into whatever he is making it of" (ἀποδοῦναι εἰς ἐκεῖνο ἐξ οὗ ἂν ποιῇ), Socrates makes the specific point that the carpenter must know how to put into wood the *kerkis* which is naturally fit for a given thing (Καὶ τὴν φύσει κερκίδα ἑκάστῳ πεφυκυῖαν εἰς ξύλον).[114]

Socrates uses the same technical phrases and notions in his account of the custom-giver's expert production of names. First, Socrates makes the point that the custom-giver must know how to put into sounds and syllables the name which is naturally fit for a given thing (389d4-6: Ἆρ' οὖν, ὦ βέλτιστε, καὶ τὸ ἑκάστῳ φύσει πεφυκὸς ὄνομα τὸν νομοθέτην ἐκεῖνον εἰς τοὺς φθόγγους καὶ τὰς συλλαβὰς δεῖ ἐπίστασθαι τιθέναι [...]). Second, Socrates makes the point the authoritative custom-giver making and giving all names while looking to the thing itself which a name is (389d6-8: [...] καὶ βλέποντα πρὸς αὐτὸ ἐκεῖνο ὃ ἔστιν ὄνομα, πάντα τὰ ὀνόματα ποιεῖν τε καὶ τίθεσθαι, εἰ μέλλει κύριος εἶναι ὀνομάτων θέτης;).

What does Socrates' account of carpentry and name-making in this passage tell us about Socrates' view of Hermogenes' character and views? It seems clear that Socrates *presupposes* (rather than introduces) the different technical phrases and notions in this passage.[115] In that case, I do not see how we can make sense of what Socrates does in this passage, unless we assume that he has designed his strategy to deal with someone who is already very familiar with the Socratic account of productive expertise. In which case, we have strong confirmation of our interpretation of Hermogenes, not

[110] Goldschmidt 1940: 68-84; Sedley 2003: 82, n. 13; Sedley 2007: 72-73; Ademollo 2011: 125-132.

[111] For the notion that expert production involves the process of *looking to something*, cf. *Grg.* 503d-504e, *Resp.* 596b.

[112] For the notion that the expert producer looks to the form, cf. *Grg.* 503d-504e, *Resp.* 596b.

[113] For the notion that the form is "the thing itself which x is", cf. *Phd.* 74b, *Resp.* 532a-b.

[114] For the notion that the expert producer renders or inserts the form of something into some material, cf. *Resp.* 500c-501c

[115] Cf. Ademollo 2011: 126-127; *pace* Sedley 2007: 72-73.

as someone intellectually weak or silly nor as the voice of common sense, but as an experienced Socratic philosopher.

At the end of this subsection (390a5-10, i.e. the passage cited above), Socrates concludes that as long as a Greek custom-giver renders, in some syllables regardless of what kind, the form of the name which is appropriate to a given thing, the Greek custom-giver is no worse than the one anywhere else. What is the relation between this conclusion and Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names? At a general level, Socrates' conclusion echoes Hermogenes' initial summary of Cratylus' view that "there is a natural correctness of names for both Greeks and barbarians, the same for all" (383a7-b2: [...] ὀρθότητά τινα τῶν ὀνομάτων πεφυκέναι καὶ Ἕλλησι καὶ βαρβάροις τὴν αὐτὴν ἅπασιν). Clearly, Cratylus' view (383a-b) and Socrates' conclusion (390a) are inconsistent with, not only Hermogenes' specific view that any person is allowed to call any given thing a different name which this person has given this thing, but also the general view that agreement, and not nature, determines the correctness of names, since both the specific and the general view essentially holds that what determines the correctness of any given name is the relevant local agreement made by an individual person, group, city, or people. Therefore, according to this view, there is no universal correctness of names beyond the fact that agreement determines the correctness of names.

Importantly, Socrates establishes this conception of a universal correctness of names by introducing the notion of productive expertise and specifically the notion that the correctness of the product of expertise depends on the form, and not the matter, of the product. Somewhat surprisingly, some scholars hold that Socrates' line of argument in this subsection amounts to the claim that the correctness of names somehow depends on the material constitution of the name (and that, for this reason, Hermogenes is wrong to think that agreement, and not nature, determines the correctness of names).[116] Other scholars hold that Socrates' line of argument in this subsection *leaves open* the question (supposedly settled later in the dialogue) whether the correctness of a given name somehow depends on the matter, and not just the form, of the name.[117] In the first case, scholars seem to have been guided by the mistaken assumption that Socrates' arguments against Hermogenes' view about the correctness of names (and the more general view that agreement, and not nature, determines the correctness of names) must somehow involve the notion that the correctness of names (also) depends on the matter of names, since Hermogenes' view is a view about the material shape of names.[118] In the second case, scholars seem to have been guided by the view that, in the final section of the second part of the dialogue (421c3-427d3), Socrates does argue for the view that the correctness of names depends on the matter of names.[119] How-

[116] Ademollo 2011: 135; Crivelli 2008: 226.
[117] Sedley 2003: 130.
[118] Ademollo 2011: 2011.
[119] Sedley 2003: 130.

ever, even if that is true, it does not follow that Socrates leaves open the question about dependency on matter in the present passage, only that Socrates re-opens the question later and changes his view. As we have seen, in the present passage Socrates clearly holds that the correctness of names only depends on their possession of the appropriate form, and not on their possession of some specific matter (cf. 390a6-8: [...] ἕως ἂν τὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος εἶδος ἀποδιδῷ τὸ προσῆκον ἑκάστῳ **ἐν ὁποιαισοῦν συλλαβαῖς**). Also, as I shall try to show in the following two chapters, Socrates does not change his view about this question, despite appearances to the contrary.

### 1.4.2 Expert supervision (390b1-390e5)

Having shown Hermogenes that the correctness of a name (like any product of expertise) depends on the form (and not the matter) of the name (389a5-390a10), Socrates goes on to show Hermogenes that the proper judge of the correctness of names is the expert user, the dialectician, and not the expert producer, the custom-giver, (390c2-12), and that it is the custom-giver's task to make a name while having the dialectician as supervisor, if he is to give names well (390d5-8).

Returning to the account of the carpenter, Socrates asks Hermogenes who will know if the appropriate form of the *kerkis* has been put in some wood regardless of what kind: the producer (i.e. the carpenter) or the future user (i.e. the weaver)? In Hermogenes' view, it is more likely to be the future user (390b1-5). Along the same lines, Socrates asks Hermogenes to confirm that the future user of the lyre-maker's product is the person who knows how best to supervise the lyre-maker while he is working and who knows if the finished product is well-made or not. Hermogenes confirms this and explains that this person is the lyre player (390b6-11). Similarly, Socrates asks Hermogenes who the future user of the lyre-maker's product is, and Hermogenes replies that it is the captain (390b12-c1).

Having developed this new aspect of the account of the carpenter (and the other expert producers), Socrates has Hermogenes confirm that the person who best supervises the custom-giver and judges the finished product both in Greece and among barbarians is the future user (390c2-5). Further, Socrates has Hermogenes confirm that this person is the one who knows how to ask questions, that the same person knows how to answer questions, and that the person who knows how to ask and answer questions is not called anything else than ὁ διαλεκτικός, i.e. "the expert in conversation" or "the dialectician" (390c6-12). Finally, Socrates concludes the analogy between the carpenter and the custom-giver by pointing out that it is the carpenter's task to make a rudder while the captain supervises, if the rudder is to be a good one, and that, similarly, it is the custom-giver's task to make a name while having the dialectician as supervisor, if he is to give names well (390d1-8). Then, in the final passage of this part of the dialogue, Socrates confronts Hermogenes with the results of their inquiry (390d9-e5):

> Κινδυνεύει ἄρα, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, εἶναι οὐ φαῦλον, ὡς σὺ οἴει, ἡ τοῦ ὀνόματος θέσις, οὐδὲ φαύλων ἀνδρῶν οὐδὲ τῶν ἐπιτυχόντων. καὶ Κρατύλος ἀληθῆ

> λέγει λέγων φύσει τὰ ὀνόματα εἶναι τοῖς πράγμασι, καὶ οὐ πάντα δημιουργὸν ὀνομάτων εἶναι, ἀλλὰ μόνον ἐκεῖνον τὸν ἀποβλέποντα εἰς τὸ τῇ φύσει ὄνομα ὃν ἑκάστῳ καὶ δυνάμενον αὐτοῦ τὸ εἶδος τιθέναι εἴς τε τὰ γράμματα καὶ τὰς συλλαβάς.

> It looks, then, Hermogenes, as if name-giving is not something simple, as you think, nor does it belong to simple men or any chance persons. And Cratylus speaks the truth when he says that names belong to things by nature, and that not every person is a maker of names, but only the one who looks to the natural name for any given thing and is able to put its form into letters and syllables.

In this subsection, Socrates briefly treats three pairs of expert users and producers (the carpenter and the weaver; the lyre-maker and the lyre player; the ship-builder and the captain) in order to lead Hermogenes to a similar view of the expert user and producer of names (390b1-d8). Having led Hermogenes to this view of the dialectician and the custom-giver, Socrates concludes that Hermogenes was wrong to consider name-giving something simple, and that Cratylus was right to consider names as belong to things by nature (390d9-e5).

As scholars have noted, Socrates makes some (very) Socratic claims in his account of the three pairs of expert users and producers and in his account of the dialectician and the custom-giver.[120] First, Socrates and Hermogenes agree that the one who knows whether the appropriate form of *kerkis* is in some wood regardless of what kind is the future user (i.e. the weaver), and that the future user of the lyre-maker's product is the one who knows best how to supervise the production and understands whether the product is well-made or not (i.e. the lyre-player).[121] Second, Socrates describes the future user of names as the one who knows how to ask and answer questions and identifies this person as ὁ διαλεκτικός, i.e. "the expert in conversation" or "the dialectician".[122]

What does Socrates' account of expert user and producer and of the dialectician show us about Socrates' view of Hermogenes' character and views? Socrates clearly presupposes Hermogenes' familiarity with these notions, especially in the case of the dialectician. For this reason, this subsection gives us strong confirmation of our inter-

[120] Goldschmidt 1940: 84-90; Sedley 2003: 62-63; Ademollo 2011: 138-144.

[121] For the notion that the expert producer is subordinate to the expert user in these respects, cf. *Resp.* 601b-602b, *Euthd.* 288-292 (on the interpretation of this passage, see Jones 2010: 96-135).

[122] For the notion that the dialectician is the one who knows how to ask and answer questions, cf. *Resp.* 531c-535a, esp. 534d8-10 (Socrates asking Glaucon): Νομοθετήσεις δὴ αὐτοῖς ταύτης μάλιστα τῆς παιδείας ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι, ἐξ ἧς ἐρωτᾶν τε καὶ ἀποκρίνεσθαι ἐπιστημονέστατα οἷοί τ' ἔσονται; For the notion that dialectic (or Socratic philosophical discussion) consists in asking and answering questions, cf. *Cri.* 50c, *Phd.* 75d, *Prt.* 336a-d, *Grg.* 449b.

pretation of Hermogenes, not as someone intellectually weak or silly nor as the voice of common sense, but as an experienced Socratic philosopher.[123]

In this subsection, Socrates claims that the proper judge of the correctness of names is the expert user, the dialectician, and not the expert producer, the custom-giver, (390c2-12), and that it is the custom-giver's task to make a name while having the dialectician as supervisor, if he is to give names well (390d5-8). What is the relation between this conclusion and Hermogenes' views about the correctness of names? At a general level, Socrates' claims serve to *amplify* the previous conclusion that name-giving is not a task for everyone, but the task of the expert name-maker who is a custom-giver, and that this custom-giver is the rarest of craftsmen among humans (388e7-389a3). In the present subsection, Socrates explains that this extremely rare expert who possesses an extremely high level of expertise is in fact *subordinate* to another expert who (we must assume) is at least equally rare and possesses an even higher (indeed the highest possible) level of expertise. As Socrates points out, these claims are inconsistent with Hermogenes' claims that name-giving is something simple, and that it belongs to simple men and any chance persons (390d9-11), or, as we have put it so far, that any person is allowed to call any given thing a different name which this person has given this thing (cf. 385d-e). They are inconsistent with the claim that name-giving is something simple, since the act of name-giving is subject to expertise, and not just any expertise, but the expertise of the custom-giver. They are inconsistent with the claim that name-giving belongs to simple men and any chance persons, since name-giving belongs to a pair of experts, and not just any pair of experts, but the rarest pair of experts possessing the highest levels of expertise. Further, they are inconsistent with the claim that any person is allowed to call any given thing a different name which this person has given this thing. Of course, it is *possible* for any given person to call any given thing a different name which this person has given this thing, but it would be wrong for this person to do this, not just because the person does not possess the expertise of name-making, but also because the person would not be giving the name under the supervision of the dialectician and therefore would not be giving the name *well*.

What about a more moderate version of the view that agreement, and not nature, determines the correctness of names? Consider for example the view that a priviliged person, and not just any person, is allowed to call some thing (within a specific range of things), and not just any given thing, a different name which this person has given the thing. Or the view that a society (but not an individual person) is allowed to call some

[123] Curiously, some scholars recognize that this passage pressupposes familiarity with central Socratic views but do not bring this to bear on their interpretation of Hermogenes' views and character in the dialogue as a whole; cf. Ademollo 2011: 125-127 Also, other scholars recognize that, in this passage (389a-390e), Hermogenes must be taken as familiar with central Socratic views, especially the theory of forms, but do not bring this to bear on their interpretation of Hermogenes' views and character in the dialogue as a whole. Cf. Sedley 2003: 39 n. 27.

thing (and not just any given thing), a different name which this society has given the thing. These views do not hold, as Hermogenes does, that name-giving is something simple, at least not in the sense that it belongs to simple men and any chance persons. They do hold, however, that name-giving is something simple in the sense that the act of name-giving is not subject to expertise. If they did grant that name-giving is subject to expertise, they would have to grant that the source of correctness lies, not in the relevant agreement being made, but in the relevant expertise. In which case they would have granted that agreement is not what determines the correctness of names. This, then, is the crux of the matter. As Socrates develops the argument against Hermogenes' view and in favour of the natural correctness of names, the really important point is not the extreme rarity or the extremely high level of expertise characterizing the custom-giver and the dialectician, but simply the claim that the act of name-giving is the subject of expertise.

# Chapter 2

# A specific account of natural correctness (390e-427d)

The second part of the *Cratylus* opens with Hermogenes requesting a more *specific* account of natural correctness in order to be fully convinced (390e6-391a3). In response, Socrates proposes to examine Homer's view of the names of Hektor and Astyanax and thereby establish Homer's view of the correctness of names (391b4-394d1). Having dealt with the names of Hektor and Astyanax, Socrates turns to the names of Orestes and Agamemnon (394e8-395b2). Having begun retracing the genealogy of the Tantalids, Socrates treats the names of Atreus, Pelops, and Tantalos himself (395b2-e5) before turning to the names of their divine ancestors: Zeus, Kronos, and Ouranos (395e5-396c3). Socrates suggests (more or less ironically) that he owes these interpretations to a meeting with Euthyphro earlier that morning and proposes (more or less ironically) to make use of Euthyphro's wisdom in the subsequent interpretations of names (396c3-397a4). Then, in a transitional passage, Socrates points out that they have come upon some sort of "model" or "outline", and that they should leave the names of humans and heroes and turn to the names of eternal and natural things (397a5-c3). Having secured Hermogenes' consent to his proposal (397c3), Socrates begins the inquiry into the Greek names of eternal and natural things by assessing the names "gods", "daimones", "heroes", and "humans" (397c-399c) as well as the names "body" and "soul" (399d-400c). Subsequently, Hermogenes takes the lead and asks Socrates to assess the names of the Olympic gods (400d-408d) and the names of the sun, the moon, the stars, the natural elements, and the seasons (408d-410e). After this, Hermogenes asks Socrates to assess the names of virtues and vices (411a-419b), the names of pleasures, pains, and desires (419b-420b) and the names of belief, will, compulsion, and voluntariness (420b-e). Finally, Hermogenes asks Socrates to assess the greatest and finest names: "truth", "falsehood", "being", and "name" (421a-c). In the final section of this part of the dialogue (421c-427d), Hermogenes asks Socrates to explain the so-called "first names" – the supposed element names composing other names but not them-

selves composed of other names.[1] In response, Socrates shows how one can make the first names indicate the beings of things, not by composing them of other names, but by making them imitate the beings of things by means of their letters and syllables (422c-424a). Finally, pointing out that someone claiming to be an expert on names must know how to prove the correctness of the first names, Socrates agrees to give a brief and tentative suggestion about how the Greek name-maker made the first names by considering the imitiative powers of letters and syllables (426a-427d).

Thus, briefly put, in this part of the dialogue Socrates' aim apparently is to convince Hermogenes that nature, and not agreement, determines the correctness of names. The first main purpose of this chapter is to show that Socrates' apparent aim is his real aim. Let me explain.

Scholars generally take Socrates as supporting (or as purporting to support) the general account of natural correctness *by explaining and illustrating his conception of etymology*, i.e. the view that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things.[2] If we consider these explanations and illustrations, however, Socrates does not seem to believe that the interpretation of names can be relied upon to provide knowledge of things. Scholars have different reasons for thinking this: some hold that Socrates ridicules or undermines the very notion that the interpretation of names can be relied upon to provide knowledge of things; others claim that Socrates merely points out that the interpretation of names may only succeed in providing knowledge of the name-giver's view of things; I explain my own reasons below. Now, given that Socrates does not seem to believe that the interpretation of names can be relied upon to provide knowledge of things, we might come to doubt that Socrates' apparent aim is his real aim. Why would Socrates put forward explanations and illustrations which indicate that the interpretation of names cannot be relied upon to provide knowledge of things, unless his aim is not really to convince Hermogenes of the natural correctness of names, but rather to set out arguments in favour of the account while implying that these arguments are not strong enough?[3]

One way of removing this doubt is to reinterpret Socrates' explanations and illustrations in order to show that Socrates really does believe that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things, while pointing out that Socrates' conception of etymology does not entail that names can be relied upon to provide knowledge of things. Rather, according to this line of interpretation, Socrates' conception only entails that interpreting a thing's name can be relied upon to provide knowledge of the

[1] Scholars generally prefer the translation "primary names", but for reasons I shall explain at the end of this chapter I prefer the translation "first names".

[2] Guthrie 1978: 7-8; Schofield 1982: 61-65; Annas 1982: 106; Baxter 1992: 1-7, 56-106; Dalimier 1998: 38-39; Barney 2001: 2, 49-57; Sedley 2003: 5, 28; Ademollo 2011: 197-210.

[3] For this type of interpretation, cf. Ademollo 2011: 197-210, esp. p. 208: "That is to say, at least part of the etymologies' function is to contribute to the argument of the dialogue by undermining naturalism while pretending to put it into practice."

name-giver's view of the thing; and only if this view is correct, does the interpretation of the name provide knowledge of the thing.[4]

As I read Socrates' explanations and illustrations, however, Socrates seems to believe that names cannot provide knowledge of things. On the contrary, Socrates seems to hold that one must interpret names by using what is (presumed) known about the bearer of the name and about the name-giver's view of things, not the other way around.

The important question, given this state of affairs, is how we can treat Socrates' apparent aim as his real aim while acknowledging that (as his explanations and illustrations indicate) Socrates believes that names cannot provide knowledge of things. My own view, in brief, is that we must give up one basic assumption shared by all scholars: that Socrates supports (or purports to support) the general account of natural correctness *by explaining and illustrating his conception of etymology*, i.e. the view that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things. More generally, we must acknowledge that nowhere in the *Cratylus* does Socrates hold (or purport to hold) that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things. This universal (but mistaken) assumption among scholars seems to be the result of (among other things) three mistaken interpretations in each of the three parts of the dialogue.

In the first part of the dialogue, Socrates offers his account of the name as an instrument for teaching and for separating being (387d-388c). One might think that this account entails that (correct) names can teach, and that, in consequence, we can learn or discover the nature of things by interpreting (correct) names.[5] As we have seen, however, the teaching component of the account only entails that (correct) names can be used for teaching, not that names can teach.

In the second part of the dialogue, Socrates proposes the principle of natural correctness that a thing's name should indicate the thing's being (or nature), where the Greek word translated by "indicate" is δηλοῦν.[6] One might think that δηλοῦν should be translated by something stronger than "indicate", e.g. "reveal" or "disclose".[7] If the correctness of names really consisted in revealing or disclosing the beings (or natures) of things, it would make sense to suppose that names can provide knowledge of things. As we shall see, however, δηλοῦν is used interchangebly with σημαίνειν, and for this reason alone (as well as for other reasons) we should refrain from construing δηλοῦν as meaning anything stronger than "signify", hence "indicate".

In the third part of the dialogue, Socrates learns that, according to Cratylus, names have the power to teach (435d4-6), and that interpreting names is the only and best way

[4] For this kind of reinterpretation, cf. Sedley 2003: 25-50, esp. 28.

[5] Méridier 1931: 28-29; Schofield 1982: 61-2; Ademollo 2011: 427.

[6] See e.g. the description of Atreus' name (395b5-8): ἡ οὖν τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐπωνυμία σμικρὸν παρακλίνει καὶ ἐπικεκάλυπται, ὥστε μὴ πᾶσι **δηλοῦν τὴν φύσιν** τοῦ ἀνδρός· τοῖς δ' ἐπαΐουσι περὶ ὀνομάτων ἱκανῶς δηλοῖ ὃ βούλεται ὁ "Ἀτρεύς."

[7] Those are the translations chosen by, e.g.: Guthrie 1978: 8, 29-30; Baxter 1992: 5.

to teach and learn about things (436a3-8). In the subsequent passages, Socrates tries to show Cratylus that interpreting names is neither the only nor the best way to learn about things (436a-439b). One might think that these passages leave open the question whether, or perhaps even imply that, according to Socrates, names have the power to teach in the sense that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things, even if the interpretation of names cannot be relied upon to provide knowledge of things.[8] As we shall see, however, in these passages Socrates is best taken as claiming (or at least implying) that the interpretation of names cannot provide knowledge of things.

Once we give up the assumption that Socrates supports (or purports to support) the general account of natural correctness by explaining and illustrating his conception of etymology (understood as the view that interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things), it is no longer a problem that Socrates' explanations and illustrations show that he does not believe the interpretation of names can be relied upon to provide knowledge of things. In other words, there is no reason why this fact should make us doubt that Socrates' apparent aim is his real aim.

This state of affairs leaves us with a question, however. If Socrates' strategy in this part of the dialogue is not to explain and illustrate his conception of etymology (and thereby support, or purport to support, the general account of natural correctness), what is his strategy? This brings us to the second main purpose of this chapter: to show that Socrates seeks to achieve his (both apparent and real) aim by employing a strategy which is especially designed to deal with Hermogenes' views and character as a Socratic philosopher. As we saw in the previous chapter, in the *Cratylus* Hermogenes is presented as a sharp and experienced intellectual and, most importantly, as a Socratic philosopher. As I shall try to show in this chapter, this feature of the dialogue is what allows us to understand the strategy which drives Socrates' line of argument in the second part of the dialogue. Briefly put, Hermogenes' request for a more specific account of natural correctness at the beginning of the second part of the dialogue has a parallel in Glaucon and Adeimantus' request for a more specific account of justice in Book 2 of the *Republic* (358b1-7; 367b3-6; 367e1-4). Correspondingly, in the second part of the *Cratylus* Socrates responds to Hermogenes' request by employing the same kind of strategy which he employs in his discussion with Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book 2 to 4 of the *Republic*. Let me explain.

In the *Republic*, Socrates responds to the brothers' request for a more *specific* account of justice by identifying a "model" or "image" of justice in the fundamental principle that each citizen should only follow the one occupation for which he is naturally equipped and leave other occupations to other citizens (370a-c; cf. 370c-d; 374a-e). Next, Socrates provides support for his specific account by showing that the principle provisionally identified as the model of justice applies to the city as a whole (427d-434c). Finally, Socrates completes his specific account by showing that this principle

[8] Sedley 2003: 159-162.

of justice applies to the human soul as well as to the city (434d-444e).

In the *Cratylus*, Socrates responds to Hermogenes' request for a more specific account by identifying a model of natural correctness in the principle that a thing's name should signify (or indicate) the thing's nature (or being) (391c-397c). Then, Socrates provides support for his specific account by showing that the principle provisionally identified as the model of natural correctness applies to the Greek names of eternal and natural things (397c-421c). Finally, Socrates completes his specific account by showing that the principle of natural correctness applies to first names (or element names) as well as to later names (or composite names) (421c-427d).

Besides responding to Hermogenes' request for a more *specific* account of natural correctness, Socrates responds to Hermogenes' need for a more *concrete* account, i.e. an account which shows why existing Greek names constitute evidence for, rather than against, the account of natural correctness. In the first section (391c-397c), Socrates responds to Hermogenes' need for a more concrete account by showing that the Greek names of some famous humans (and a few gods) are naturally correct. In the middle section (397c-421c), Socrates continues his concrete account by showing that the Greek names of eternal and natural things have some standard of natural correctness. In the final section (421c-427d), Socrates completes the concrete account by showing that the Greek "first names" have some standard of correctness.

Having described how Socrates' strategy is especially designed to deal with Hermogenes' views and character as a Socratic philosopher, we are brought to the third main purpose of this chapter: to show that, if we keep in mind Socrates' strategy and Hermogenes' character, we get a very different, and much more Socratic, understanding of Socrates' account of natural correctness. Let me highlight some of the examples which bear most directly on Socrates' attempt to convince Hermogenes that nature, and not agreement, determines the correctness of names. As we have seen, the names of humans constitute the core motivation for Hermogenes' initial view about the correctness of names. Recall Hermogenes' report of his conversation with Cratylus in which Hermogenes tried to drive Cratylus towards the conclusion that "any given person has the name that we call him" (383b4-6: Οὐκοῦν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀνθρώποις πᾶσιν, ὅπερ καλοῦμεν ὄνομα ἕκαστον, τοῦτό ἐστιν ἑκάστῳ ὄνομα;). Recall also that, in Hermogenes' initial statement of his position, the only example given concerned slave-owners changing the names of their slaves (384d5: ὥσπερ τοῖς οἰκέταις ἡμεῖς μετατιθέμεθα). In the first section of this part of the dialogue (391a4-397c3), Socrates engages with this fundamental part of Hermogenes' position by examining the names of Hektor and Astyanax, on the one hand, (392b-394d) and Orestes and Agamemnon, on the other (394d-395b).

In the case of Hektor and Astyanax, Socrates argues that "Astyanax" is a naturally correct name for Hektor's son, because "Astyanax" signifies king, and, under normal circumstances, Astyanax will have inherited Hektor's kingly nature. More broadly, Socrates mentions three groups (kings, generals, and doctors) and implies that, under normal circumstances, members of these groups beget offspring which belong to the

same group as the fathers and therefore should have names which belong to the group of the father. A non-Socratic reader might grant that humans do beget offspring with heritable traits, but still object that humans do not beget offspring which belong to the same *kind* of humans as themselves – or at least not the kinds mentioned by Socrates (kings, generals, doctors, etc.). As a Socratic, however, Hermogenes is unlikely to share this concern. As we see in the *Republic*, for example, Socrates and the two brothers have no doubt that there are different kinds of human beings, and that humans normally beget offspring of the same kind as themselves. That is the truth, for instance, which underlies the "noble lie" told by Socrates at the end of Book 3 (414b-415c). Indeed, the three main kinds of human beings described in the *Republic* - the rulers, the auxiliaries, and the artisans/farmers - correspond quite neatly to the three kinds mentioned in this passage: kings, generals, and doctors.

In the case of Orestes and Agamemnon, Socrates introduces the pair as an example of the principle that people who come into being against nature (παρὰ φύσιν) should be given the name of the kind to which they themselves belong (394d5-10). More specifically, Socrates explains, the son of a pious man who is born (or has become) impious should be given the name of the kind to which he himself belongs. Then, turning to the names of Orestes and Agamemnon, Socrates argues that "Agamemnon" is a naturally correct name for Agamemnon, because it signifies admirable steadfastness, and the Greek army in Troy stayed and endured the war (under Agamemnon's leadership). A (modern) non-Socratic reader might object that Agamemnon should not be regarded as admirable for his steadfastness (i.e. for his bravery and leadership), but as morally bad or even, in the words of Oliver Taplin, as "a nasty piece of work".[9] As a Socratic, however, Hermogenes is likely to share Socrates' view of Agamemnon "as an exceptionally good man with regard to warfare" and as superior to his brother Menelaus.[10] Further, a non-Socratic reader might object that Agamemnon's steadfastness is not an example of the pious man in Socrates' more specific version of the initial principle. As a Socratic, however, Hermogenes is likely to share Socrates' view about the unity of virtue. Since the specific moral virtues (self-control, bravery, justice, piety, etc.) are all in reality one general moral virtue, Socrates and Hermogenes seem likely to assume that names signifying specific moral virtues in reality signify one general moral virtue. Thus, the principle does not distinguish between specific virtues and vices, but only between general virtue and general vice. This explains why Agamemnon can serve as a good example of the principle. Since Agamemnon possesses bravery, he also possesses general moral virtue, including piety. Thus, Agamemnon begetting Orestes is in fact an example of a pious man begetting an impious son.

[9] Taplin 1990: 65.

[10] *Symp.* 174b7-c1: ποιήσας γὰρ [sc. Ὅμηρος] τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα διαφερόντως ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα τὰ πολεμικά, τὸν δὲ Μενέλεων "μαλθακὸν αἰχμητήν."

## 2.1 Hermogenes' request (390e6-391a3)

At the end of the first part of the dialogue, Socrates concluded that Hermogenes' view about name-giving is wrong and that Cratylus is right to think that there is a natural correctness of names and that name-giving is the task of the expert name-maker (390d-e). In reply, Hermogenes makes the following statement (390e6-391a3):

> Οὐκ ἔχω, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὅπως χρὴ πρὸς ἃ λέγεις ἐναντιοῦσθαι. ἴσως μέντοι οὐ ῥᾴδιόν ἐστιν οὕτως ἐξαίφνης πεισθῆναι, ἀλλὰ δοκῶ μοι ὧδε ἂν μᾶλλον πιθέσθαι σοι, εἴ μοι δείξειας ἥντινα φῂς εἶναι τὴν φύσει ὀρθότητα ὀνόματος.
>
> I don't know how one should challenge what you say, Socrates. But I guess it isn't easy to be convinced so suddenly. And I do think I would believe you more firmly if you showed me what, more specifically, you say this natural correctness of names is.

Scholars make relatively little of this passage beyond stating that Hermogenes asks Socrates for further elucidation of the account of natural correctness. According to Timothy Baxter, Hermogenes asks Socrates to provide a concrete account of Greek names to balance the abstract theory offered in the first part of the dialogue,[11] while David Sedley and Francesco Ademollo seem to think that Hermogenes asks Socrates to explain more specifically what it is for a name to belong by nature to the thing named.[12] In my view, Sedley and Ademollo are closer to the truth here, but we can clarify the issue if we introduce two distinctions.

First, we should distinguish between a more specific account and a more concrete account, since an account can be described in terms of its level of specificity/generality as well as in terms of its level of concreteness/abstractness. I define an account with a relatively high level of generality as an account which explains the most basic theoretical notions (e.g. the name and the act of naming) in terms of other notions (e.g. the instrument and expert action) without explaining these other notions in any great detail. And I define an account with a relatively high level of abstractness as an account which explains the theory of something (e.g. the correctness of names) without explaining the relation between the theory and the real world examples which fall under the scope of the theory (e.g. the correctness of existing Greek names). Using the distinction between a more specific account and a more concrete account, we can say that, in the first part of the dialogue, Socrates' account is both very general and very abstract, and that, in the second part, Socrates' account is both more specific and more concrete.

[11] Baxter 1992: 49.
[12] Sedley 2003: 5. n. 9, 75; Ademollo 2011: 146-147.

Second, we should distinguish between what Hermogenes requests and what Socrates thinks he needs. Socrates provides an account which is both more specific and more concrete, because he thinks Hermogenes needs both kinds of account. But, as I shall argue below, if we consider Hermogenes' choice of words in the present passage, it seems clear that he mainly requests a more specific account of natural correctness. In either case, Hermogenes' request has parallels in Glaucon and Adeimantus' behaviour in the *Republic*. So let us return to the question about the Socratic nature of Hermogenes' views and character.

How does Hermogenes' statement in this passage fit his initial presentation of himself as a Socratic? Hermogenes did tell Socrates that, in his previous discussions with Cratylus and many others, he found himself unable to be convinced (οὐ δύναμαι πεισθῆναι) that there is a natural correctness of names (384c10-d2). But he also told Socrates that if he was wrong he was ready to listen to, and learn from, Cratylus and anyone else (384d7-e2). Was Hermogenes thereby expressing a genuinely Socratic attitude to knowledge and inquiry, or was he merely presenting himself as having such an attitude? With a basis on central Socratic ideas shared by Hermogenes, Socrates has produced an argument to show that Hermogenes is wrong, and yet Hermogenes remains unconvinced even though he is unable to challenge the argument. This could be taken as revealing an intellectual stubbornness in Hermogenes that should make us question his Socratic credentials. But I think that would be wrong. In my view, this passage confirms our picture of Hermogenes as a genuine Socratic. In order to show this, I begin with a passage from the *Republic* which I regard as a partial parallel to our passage in the *Cratylus*.

At the beginning of Book 6 of the *Republic* (484a-b), Socrates proposes to consider the question whether philosophers or non-philosophers should be political leaders. Starting from the definition of the philosopher reached in Book 5 (474b-480a), Socrates tries to show that only philosophers should be political leaders because, in addition to their unique knowledge of what really is, fully developed philosophers possess a whole range of practical abilities and moral virtues (484c-487a). In response to this conclusion, Adeimantus has the following reaction (487b1-d5):

> Καὶ ὁ Ἀδείμαντος, Ὦ Σώκρατες, ἔφη, πρὸς μὲν ταῦτά σοι οὐδεὶς ἂν οἷός τ' εἴη ἀντειπεῖν. ἀλλὰ γὰρ τοιόνδε τι πάσχουσιν οἱ ἀκούοντες ἑκάστοτε ἃ νῦν λέγεις· ἡγοῦνται δι' ἀπειρίαν τοῦ ἐρωτᾶν καὶ ἀποκρίνεσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου παρ' ἕκαστον τὸ ἐρώτημα σμικρὸν παραγόμενοι, ἀθροισθέντων τῶν σμικρῶν ἐπὶ τελευτῆς τῶν λόγων μέγα τὸ σφάλμα καὶ ἐναντίον τοῖς πρώτοις ἀναφαίνεσθαι, καὶ ὥσπερ ὑπὸ τῶν πεττεύειν δεινῶν οἱ μὴ τελευτῶντες ἀποκλείονται καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ὅτι φέρωσιν, οὕτω καὶ σφεῖς τελευτῶντες ἀποκλείεσθαι καὶ οὐκ ἔχειν ὅτι λέγωσιν ὑπὸ πεττείας αὖ ταύτης τινὸς ἑτέρας, οὐκ ἐν ψήφοις ἀλλ' ἐν λόγοις· ἐπεὶ τό γε ἀληθὲς οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον ταύτῃ ἔχειν. λέγω δ' εἰς τὸ παρὸν ἀποβλέψας. νῦν γὰρ φαίη ἄν τίς σοι λόγῳ μὲν οὐκ ἔχειν καθ' ἕκαστον τὸ ἐρωτώμενον ἐναντιοῦσθαι, ἔργῳ

> δὲ ὁρᾶν, ὅσοι ἂν ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν ὁρμήσαντες μὴ τοῦ πεπαιδεῦσθαι ἕνεκα ἁψάμενοι νέοι ὄντες ἀπαλλάττωνται, ἀλλὰ μακρότερον ἐνδιατρίψωσιν, τοὺς μὲν πλείστους καὶ πάνυ ἀλλοκότους γιγνομένους, ἵνα μὴ παμπονήρους εἴπωμεν, τοὺς δ' ἐπιεικεστάτους δοκοῦντας ὅμως τοῦτό γε ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐπιτηδεύματος οὗ σὺ ἐπαινεῖς πάσχοντας, ἀχρήστους ταῖς πόλεσι γιγνομένους.
>
> At this point Adeimantus intervened. 'No one could possibly argue against what you've said so far, Socrates. But I know what happens to people who at one time or another have listened to the things you've just been saying. As they see it, their lack of experience of question and answer allows them to be led astray by the argument at each stage. But then when all the little things they've said are collected together at the end, it reveals a major error and contradiction of what they said originally. They are like beginners playing draughts against experts. By the end of the game they find they are trapped, and have no move they can make. In the same way these people find, by the end of the argument, that they are trapped and have nothing they can say in this rather different kind of draughts which uses words instead of pieces. But it does nothing to convince them that the truth is as you say. I say this with our present discussion in mind. I can imagine someone saying at this point that although he can't challenge the answer to any particular step in your questioning, in real life he can see that the majority of those who go in for philosophy – not the ones who dabble with it as part of their education and then give it up at an early stage, but the ones who spend much longer on it – turn out to be extremely odd, not to say thoroughly bad. Even for those we regard as the best of them, the effect of the way of life you recommend is to make them useless to their cities." (transl. T. Griffith)

Adeimantus raises a concern about the effect of Socrates' arguments. Adeimantus describes his concern as arising from the expected reaction of those who lack experience with philosophical discussion. When these people listen to Socrates' arguments, they are, little by little and without realizing it, led to contradict their original position. The trouble is that, as they see it, they are simply being beat at some argumentative game rather than being convinced of anything (487b3-c4). More specifically, if someone heard what Socrates just said about philosophers, this person might well admit that he cannot challenge Socrates in theoretical discussion (λόγῳ μὲν…ἐναντιοῦσθαι) but still maintain that, as a matter of real-life observation (ἔργῳ δὲ ὁρᾶν), philosophers are very different from what Socrates suggests (487c4-d5).

Scholars have thought that Adeimantus uses this description as an indirect way to communicate his own lack of conviction.[13] I think that is basically right, but I also

[13] Adam 1902: note ad loc. Burnyeat 1999: 293.

think that Adeimantus is genuinely concerned about the reactions of the people described. The reason for this is not just that Adeimantus is referring back to Socrates' and Glaucon's original aim of convincing those critical of philosophy that philosophers should be rulers (473b-474c; cf. Socrates' description of Adeimantus' imagined objector, at 488d, as τὸν ἐγκαλοῦντα τῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ). The main reason is that Adeimantus *sympathizes* with the reaction he describes. Of course, Adeimantus has not been led to contradict his original position in this case, nor does he not regard discussion with Socrates as a mere game. But the feeling that Socrates' arguments, although difficult to challenge, do not carry sufficient conviction is familiar to both Glaucon and Adeimantus. Recall, for instance, Glaucon's intervention at the beginning of Book 2 (357a1-b2). Socrates says:

> Ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα εἰπὼν ᾠμην λόγου ἀπηλλάχθαι· τὸ δ' ἦν ἄρα, ὡς ἔοικε, προοίμιον. ὁ γὰρ Γλαύκων ἀεί τε δὴ ἀνδρειότατος ὢν τυγχάνει πρὸς ἅπαντα, καὶ δὴ καὶ τότε τοῦ Θρασυμάχου τὴν ἀπόρρησιν οὐκ ἀπεδέξατο, ἀλλ' ἔφη· Ὦ Σώκρατες, πότερον ἡμᾶς βούλει δοκεῖν πεπεικέναι ἢ ὡς ἀληθῶς πεῖσαι ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ ἄμεινόν ἐστιν δίκαιον εἶναι ἢ ἄδικον;
>
> With these words I thought I had finished what I had to say. But I was wrong. Apparently it was only an introduction. Glaucon is an extremely determined character in everything he does, and on this occasion he refused to accept Thrasymachus' surrender. 'Socrates,' he said, 'do you really want to convince us that it is in every way better to be just than unjust, or is it enough merely to seem to have convinced us?' (transl. T. Griffith)

Glaucon, soon to be joined by Adeimantus, identifies the influence of the general culture and its leading figures as the reason for the lack of conviction (358c-d: Θρασυμάχου καὶ μυρίων ἄλλων; cf. 366b: ὁ τῶν πολλῶν τε καὶ ἄκρων λεγόμενος λόγος). Similarly, in Book 6, while Adeimantus' real concern is his own lack of conviction, the source of his concern – and the reason for his lack of conviction – is the influence of the general culture and its leading figures. In both Book 2 and 6, what Glaucon and Adeimantus want from Socrates is an account that provides an effective antidote to the influence of the general culture and its leading figures. In Book 2, the two brothers respond to Socrates' general arguments in Book 1 by asking him to provide a more *specific* account of justice and injustice. "Don't just demonstrate to us by argument that justice is something more powerful than injustice," Adeimantus says to Socrates. "Tell us what effect each of them has, just by itself, on the person possessing it, which makes one of them something bad and the other something good."[14] Similarly, in Book

[14] 367b3-6: μὴ οὖν ἡμῖν μόνον ἐνδείξῃ τῷ λόγῳ ὅτι δικαιοσύνη ἀδικίας κρεῖττον, ἀλλὰ τί ποιοῦσα ἑκατέρα τὸν ἔχοντα αὐτὴ δι' αὑτὴν ἡ μὲν κακόν, ἡ δὲ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν (transl. T. Griffith). Cf. 358b1-7; 367e1-4.

6, Adeimantus responds to Socrates' abstract arguments about philosophy and philosophers (474b-487a) by asking him to provide a more *concrete* account that relates the theory to real-life observations. That is, Adeimantus is not asking Socrates to explain in more detail what a philosopher is. Rather, Adeimantus wants Socrates to explain in more detail why existing philosophers have such a bad reputation, and why they seem, in most people's eyes, not to correspond with Socrates' account of true philosophers.

Returning to the *Cratylus*, I suggest that our passage and its context should be understood along the lines of the two passages in the *Republic* and their contexts. Hermogenes' lack of conviction is due, not to intellectual stubbornness, but to the influence of the general culture and its leading figures. As we saw in the previous chapter, Hermogenes seems to regard his own radical views about the correctness of names as Protagorean in spirit, just as the brothers in *Republic* regard their challenge to Socrates as Thrasymachean in spirit. And just as the brothers seem to suggest (albeit somewhat insincerely) that Thrasymachus' extreme views about justice and injustice can be regarded as the consistent result of thinking through the views and beliefs of the general culture, so Hermogenes appears to suggest that his "Protagorean" view about the correctness of names can be regarded as the consistent result of thinking through the assumptions underlying people's actual naming practices (cf. 384c-d).

So far in the dialogue, Socrates has not engaged directly with Hermogenes' position or his observations about actual naming practices. Instead, Socrates has developed an abstract line of argument, beginning with fundamental notions about the nature of things and actions and ending with the general conclusion that there is a natural correctness of names and that name-giving is not the task of everyone (as Hermogenes' position implies). In other words, Socrates' argument in the first part of the *Cratylus* combined the high level of generality that characterizes the argument about justice and injustice in Book 1 of the *Republic* with the high level of abstraction that characterizes the argument about philosophers and philosophy in Books 5 and 6. Hermogenes responds to Socrates' arguments by asking him to provide a more *specific* account of the natural correctness of names (ἀλλὰ δοκῶ μοι ὧδε ἂν μᾶλλον πιθέσθαι σοι, εἴ μοι δείξειας **ἥντινα φῂς εἶναι τὴν φύσει ὀρθότητα ὀνόματος**).[15]

In the first part of the dialogue, the account of the name as an instrument indicated that the natural correctness of a name is determined by its ability to perform the function of "separating out" (i.e. representing) the being of what it names (cf. 388b13-c1: Ὄνομα ἄρα διδασκαλικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον καὶ διακριτικὸν τῆς οὐσίας). The following account of expert name-making further indicated that the natural correctness of a

[15] For this use of the relative pronoun ὅστις, cf. Adeimantus' intervention in Book 5 of the *Republic* (449c2-d1): Ἀπορρᾳθυμεῖν ἡμῖν δοκεῖς, ἔφη, καὶ εἶδος ὅλον οὐ τὸ ἐλάχιστον ἐκκλέπτειν τοῦ λόγου ἵνα μὴ διέλθῃς, καὶ λήσειν οἰηθῆναι εἰπὼν αὐτὸ φαύλως, ὡς ἄρα περὶ γυναικῶν τε καὶ παίδων παντὶ δῆλον ὅτι κοινὰ τὰ φίλων ἔσται.
Οὐκοῦν ὀρθῶς, ἔφην, ὦ Ἀδείμαντε;
Ναί, ἦ δ' ὅς. ἀλλὰ τὸ ὀρθῶς τοῦτο, ὥσπερ τἆλλα, λόγου δεῖται τίς ὁ τρόπος τῆς κοινωνίας· πολλοὶ γὰρ ἂν γένοιντο. μὴ οὖν παρῇς **ὅντινα σὺ λέγεις** [...].

name depends on the form, rather than the matter, of the name (cf. 389d4-390a10). But this is still very general. What, Hermogenes seems to be asking, enables the name to perform this function? And how does this question relate to the distinction between form and matter? These are questions which Socrates will address in the opening section (391c-397c) and, in more theoretical depth, in the final section (421c-427d). Between these two sections, Socrates and Hermogenes will examine a very large number of Greek names, beginning with the names "god", "daimon", "hero", and "human" and ending with the names "truth", "falsehood", "being", and "non-being" (397c-421c). In this middle section, Socrates provides support for the more specific account which he has developed in the opening section.

Besides responding to Hermogenes' request for a more specific account of natural correctness, Socrates responds to Hermogenes' need for a more concrete account, i.e. an account which shows why existing Greek names constitute evidence for, rather than against, the account of natural correctness. In the first section (391c-397c), Socrates responds to Hermogenes' need for a more concrete account by showing that the Greek names of some famous humans (and a few gods) are naturally correct. In the middle section (397c-421c), Socrates continues his concrete account by showing that the Greek names of eternal and natural things have some standard of natural correctness. That is, the extended examination (397c-421c) should be understood as part of Socrates' attempt to meet Hermogenes' need for a more *concrete* account. Socrates understands that Hermogenes remains unconvinced partly – and probably mainly – because he believes that actual Greek names are evidence against the theory of natural correctness (just as Adeimantus remains unconvinced in Book 6 of the *Republic* because he believes that actual Greek philosophers are evidence against the theory of the philosopher-ruler). In response, Socrates attempts to show Hermogenes that Greek names are evidence for, rather than against, the theory of natural correctness. In the final section (421c-427d), Socrates completes the concrete account by showing that the Greek "first names" have some standard of correctness.

But first Socrates needs to find a model of the correctness of names.

## 2.2 Finding a model (391a4-397c3)

Socrates begins his response to Hermogenes' request by reminding him of his opening statement that he has no knowledge about the correctness of names but that he would like to carry out an inquiry together with Hermogenes (391a4-6; cf. 384a8-c9). As we have seen in the first part of the dialogue, this statement did not keep Socrates from taking the lead in the conversation and developing a Socratic line of argument in support of the notion of a natural correctness of names. In this part of the dialogue, Socrates takes the lead in the opening and closing sections (391a-397c; 421c-427d) but lets Hermogenes guide the conversation in the middle sections (397c-410e; 411a-421c). I take this change to be part of Socrates' renewed attempt to secure Hermogenes' con-

viction. Although Hermogenes asks Socrates to provide a more specific account of natural correctness, Socrates understands that Hermogenes also needs to play a more active role in the conversation. In the opening section, however, Socrates remains in charge of the discussion. He begins with Homer and the names of Hektor and Astyanax (391c10-394d1) and then moves on to the names of Orestes and his paternal ancestors, beginning with Agamemnon and ending with Ouranos (394d2-396c3). At the end of the section (397a6-7), Socrates concludes that they have "come upon some sort of model" (ἐπειδήπερ εἰς τύπον τινὰ ἐμβεβήκαμεν) which they can use in their further inquiry. I take it that Socrates remains in charge of the discussion in this section because he wants to steer Hermogenes in the direction of this model. But what is the model? And why does Socrates use this path to get there? These are some of the questions that will occupy us in the following subsections.

### 2.2.1 Homer on the names of Hektor and Astyanax (391b4-394d1)

After having reminded Hermogenes that they are conducting a shared inquiry, Socrates responds to his request by himself proposing that they seek a more specific account of natural correctness (391b4-5: Οὐκοῦν τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο χρὴ ζητεῖν, εἴπερ ἐπιθυμεῖς εἰδέναι, ἥτις ποτ' αὖ ἐστιν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὀρθότης.). Socrates first jokes that the best way to conduct this inquiry would be to consult Protagoras (391b7-c9), but then instead proposes that they need to learn from Homer and the other poets (391c10-d1: Ἀλλ' εἰ μὴ αὖ σε ταῦτα ἀρέσκει, παρ' Ὁμήρου χρὴ μανθάνειν καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ποιητῶν). This passage fits Socrates' general view of Homer. Of course, Socrates is famous for his criticism (in the *Republic*) both of Homer and of the people who treat Homer as a cultural authority. But while Socrates does criticise parts of Homer's depiction of gods and heroes (in Books 2 and 3 of the *Republic*) and the naïve use of Homer as a fountain of wisdom in all areas of life (in Book 10), Socrates himself regularly invokes Homer as an authority, both inside and outside of the *Republic* (cf. *Resp.* 404b-c, 441b-c, 468a-e; *Grg.* 516c; *Lach.* 201a-b; *Phd.* 94d-95a). In this case, Socrates attempts to reconstruct Homer's view of the correctness of names by reflecting on his use of the names of Hektor and Astyanax. In order to motivate the idea that Homer was concerned with the correctness of names, Socrates first mentions Homeric passages in which gods and humans are said to have different names for the same things, the assumption being that gods only use naturally correct names (391d-e). Ideally, the next step would be to find out what (according to Homer) makes the names used by the gods more correct than the names used by humans (392a-b). But, as Socrates points out, this task is too great for them (392b2-3: ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἴσως μείζω ἐστὶν ἢ κατ' ἐμὲ καὶ σὲ ἐξευρεῖν). Instead they should consider the two names of Hektor's son – "Skamandrios" and "Astyanax" – and examine what sort of correctness Homer ascribes to them (392b3-6: ὁ δὲ Σκαμάνδριός τε καὶ ὁ Ἀστυάναξ ἀνθρωπινώτερον διασκέψασθαι, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ, καὶ ῥᾷον, ἅ φησιν ὀνόματα εἶναι τῷ τοῦ Ἕκτορος υἱεῖ, τίνα ποτὲ λέγει τὴν ὀρθότητα αὐτῶν.). The reason why this task is "easier" and "more within human ca-

pacity" is not that "Skamandrios" and "Astyanax" are names of a human being, but that both names are used by human beings. As Socrates will point out a little later, the names of human beings in fact present a more difficult task than other names used by humans (397a-b). So why begin with "Skamandrios" and "Astyanax"? Because the names of humans constituted the core motivation for Hermogenes' initial view about the correctness of names. Recall Hermogenes' report of his conversation with Cratylus in which Hermogenes tried to drive Cratylus towards the conclusion that "any given person has the name that we call him" (383b4-6: Οὐκοῦν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀνθρώποις πᾶσιν, ὅπερ καλοῦμεν ὄνομα ἕκαστον, τοῦτό ἐστιν ἑκάστῳ ὄνομα;). Recall also that, in Hermogenes' initial statement of his position, the only example given concerned slave-owners changing the names of their slaves (384d5: ὥσπερ τοῖς οἰκέταις ἡμεῖς μετατιθέμεθα). Socrates realizes that in order to convince Hermogenes he must engage with this fundamental part of his position. Thus, Socrates appeals to Homer's authority in order to make Hermogenes believe that even the names of human beings are subject to the standards of natural correctness. At the same time, of course, Socrates also uses Homer for his stated purpose: to provide a more specific account of natural correctness. Let us see how Socrates seeks to achieve these two goals.

Socrates' account proceeds in two stages. In the first, Socrates attempts to show that Homer thought that "Astyanax" was a more correct name of Hektor's son than "Skamandrios" (392b9-d10). In the second, Socrates seeks to reconstruct Homer's underlying reasons for this view (392d11-394d1). Socrates begins the first stage by having Hermogenes agree that comparatively wise people use names more correctly than comparatively unwise people, and that men as a group are wiser than women as a group (392c2-9). Next, Socrates returns to Homer (392c10-d10):

> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν οἶσθα ὅτι Ὅμηρος τὸ παιδίον τὸ τοῦ Ἕκτορος ὑπὸ τῶν Τρώων φησὶν καλεῖσθαι Ἀστυάνακτα, Σκαμάνδριον δὲ δῆλον ὅτι ὑπὸ τῶν γυναικῶν, ἐπειδὴ οἵ γε ἄνδρες αὐτὸν Ἀστυάνακτα ἐκάλουν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἔοικέ γε.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ Ὅμηρος τοὺς Τρῶας σοφωτέρους ἡγεῖτο ἢ τὰς γυναῖκας αὐτῶν;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Οἶμαι ἔγωγε.
>
> ΣΩ. Τὸν "Ἀστυάνακτα" ἄρα ὀρθότερον ᾤετο κεῖσθαι τῷ παιδὶ ἢ τὸν "Σκαμάνδριον";
>
> ΕΡΜ. Φαίνεται.

> Soc. Do you know that Homer says that Hektor's little child was called "Astyanax" by the Trojan men, and that he evidently was called "Skamandrios" by the women, since the men called him "Astyanax"?
>
> Her. He certainly seems to say that.
>
> Soc. Did Homer also regard the Trojan men as wiser than their wives?
>
> Her. I think so.

Soc. So he thought that "Astyanax" was a more correct name of the child than "Skamandrios"?

Her. Apparently.

Each step in this line of reasoning appears open to questioning. First, does Homer really say that the Trojan men called Hektor's son "Astyanax"? And is it correct to draw the inference that the Trojan women must have called him "Skamandrios"?[16] Socrates seems to have in mind the passage at the end of Book 22 of the *Iliad* in which Andromache, Hektor's wife, expresses sorrow at her husband's death and fear for the future of their fatherless child (475-515). In contrast to the easy and happy life when Hektor was still alive, Andromache describes the future of her son as the life of a beggar (484-507). The description ends with these words (505-507):

νῦν δ' ἂν πολλὰ πάθῃσι, φίλου ἀπὸ πατρὸς ἀμαρτὼν,
Ἀστυάναξ, ὃν Τρῶες ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν·
οἷος γάρ σφιν ἔρυσο πύλας καὶ τείχεα μακρά.

But now, since he has lost his dear father, he will suffer many ills –
Astyanax, whom the Trojans call by this name
since, Hektor, you alone saved their gates and their high walls. (transl. A.T. Murray)

Andromache mentions her son by the name "Astyanax" and adds that this is what *the Trojans* call him – as if she wants to distance herself from that name. Her choice of words seems to support this reading. By using the phrase ἐπίκλησιν καλέουσιν, Andromache indicates that "Astyanax" is a nickname of her son rather than his birth name.[17] And by using the masculine Τρῶες, Andromache further indicates that "Astyanax" is a public nickname used by the Trojan men alone rather than by both men and women.[18] This interpretation fits nicely with the passage from Book 6 of the *Iliad* in which Homer recounts the long-awaited meeting between Andromache and Hektor (399-403):

ἦ οἱ ἔπειτ' ἤντησ', ἅμα δ' ἀμφίπολος κίεν αὐτῇ
παῖδ' ἐπὶ κόλπῳ ἔχουσ' ἀταλάφρονα, νήπιον αὔτως
Ἕκτορίδην ἀγαπητὸν, ἀλίγκιον ἀστέρι καλῷ,

[16] Scholars have generally regarded Socrates (and sometimes Plato himself) as making a mistake here, either intentionally (Ademollo and many others) or unintentionally (Sedley). Cf. Ademollo 2011: 152-4; Sedley 2003: 78-9

[17] Jong 2012: note ad loc.

[18] Cf. 22.512-14: ἀλλ' ἦ τοι τάδε πάντα καταφλέξω πυρὶ κηλέῳ/ οὐδὲν σοί γ' ὄφελος, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἐγκείσεαι αὐτοῖς,/ ἀλλὰ **πρὸς Τρώων καὶ Τρωϊάδων** κλέος εἶναι. "But all these things will surely burn in blazing fire –/ in no way a profit to you, since you will not lie in them, but to be an honor to you **from the men and women of Troy**." (transl. A.T. Murray)

> τόν ῥ' Ἕκτωρ καλέεσκε Σκαμάνδριον, αὐτὰρ οἱ ἄλλοι
> Ἀστυάνακτ'· οἶος γὰρ ἐρύετο Ἴλιον Ἕκτωρ.
>
> She now met him, and with her came a handmaid
> holding to her bosom the tender boy, a mere babe,
> the well-loved son of Hektor, like a fair star.
> Him Hektor was used to call Skamandrios, but other men
> Astyanax; for only Hektor guarded Ilios. (transl. A.T. Murray)

The natural interpretation is that Hektor calls his son by his birth name "Skamandrios" while the other Trojan men call him by his public nickname "Astyanax". Thus, Socrates seems entirely correct in claiming that Homer says that the Trojan men called Hektor's son "Astyanax", and that the Trojan women must have called him "Skamandrios". However, Hektor and Andromache also call their son "Skamandrios". This does seem to create a complication. How does Socrates explain the fact that Hektor, presumably one of the wisest Trojan men, calls his own son by the less correct name? According to David Sedley, Socrates has simply forgotten that Hector calls his son "Skamandrios", and for this reason Socrates has reached the wrong conclusion that Andromache refers to the male Trojans as distinct from the Trojan women (rather than the Trojan people in general).[19] According to Francesco Ademollo, however, Plato is deliberately presenting Socrates as making a mistake, and perhaps Plato is even presenting Socrates as pretending to be making a mistake. The purpose of this, according to Ademollo, is to warn the reader that Socrates' account of natural correctness is flawed from the very beginning.[20] I believe that both Sedley and Ademollo have overlooked another possible interpretation which has the advantage of letting us treat Socrates as not making a mistake in this passage. If we consider the evidence of ancient Greek naming practices, we see that, in some cases, the mother and not the father chose the name of the child.[21] Given this evidence, my suggestion is that Socrates assumes that Andromache gave

[19] Sedley 2003: 78.

[20] Ademollo 2011: 154.

[21] Kyriakou 2006: 173, commenting on line 499 (σοί δ'ὄνομα ποιον εθεθ' ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ;) of Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris*: "ὄνομα τίθεσθαι is standard Greek for the parents' naming of a child (or the invention of a name for something new) from Homer onwards (*Od.* 18.5, 19.406; cf. 8.550-54, *H. Hom.* 2.122 and e.g. Eur. *Ion* 75, *Ph.* 12-13, *Aegeus* fr. 2, Ar. *N.* 67, *Av.* 922-23, [Pl.] *Thg.* 122d9, Dem. 39.22, Is. 3. 30; cf. also Ar. *Av.* 809-17 [the naming of Nephelokokkygia], A. fr. 6.1, Arist. *AnPr.* 92b31). England suggests that the father is mentioned here because he was "the parent whose right it was to name the child". But in several of the texts just cited (*Odyssey* 18, the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Euripides' *Phoenissae* [57-58] and *Aegeus* fr. 2, and Aristophanes' *Nubes* [cf. Dem. 43.74-78]) both parents or even the mother only choose the name. The child was formally named in a nocturnal ceremony with sacrifice and feasting that took place ten days after the birth, the δεκάτη (see Lee on *Ion* 653 and Dunbar on Ar. *Av.* 494), hosted by the father. It is clear that the father as head of the household would very often be responsible for the naming of the child, and certainly for the public announcement of the name."

her son the birth name "Skamandrios", and that Hektor used the birth name chosen by the mother. The Trojan woman, being more conservative in their speech (for this idea, see 418b-c), also used the birth named chosen by Andromache and used by Hector, while the Trojan men, being more independent and more intelligent users of names, have Hector's son the more correct nickname "Astyanax".

This point brings us to the second step in Socrates' argument, i.e. the claim that Homer regarded the Trojan men as wiser than the Trojan women. What is Socrates' justification for this claim? We might think that Socrates simply draws on a common conception of Homer as regarding (Trojan) men as wiser than (Trojan) women. But I do no think that is what is going on. Rather, what we have here is, for the first time in the dialogue, an example of a central Socratic method of interpretation. In essence, the idea is to attribute (supposed) insights to a poet on the basis of the poet's (supposed) wisdom. In the *Republic*, for instance, Socrates uses this principle to dismiss Polemarchus' interpretation of Simonides (331d-336a). Polemarchus takes the words "one should give to each what is owed" to mean that it is just to help one's friends and harm one's enemies (331d-332b). In response, Socrates first shows Polemarchus that it is not just to harm anyone (335b-d) and then concludes (335e2-11):

> Εἰ ἄρα τὰ ὀφειλόμενα ἑκάστῳ ἀποδιδόναι φησίν τις δίκαιον εἶναι, τοῦτο δὲ δὴ νοεῖ αὐτῷ τοῖς μὲν ἐχθροῖς βλάβην ὀφείλεσθαι παρὰ τοῦ δικαίου ἀνδρός, τοῖς δὲ φίλοις ὠφελίαν, οὐκ ἦν σοφὸς ὁ ταῦτα εἰπών. οὐ γὰρ ἀληθῆ ἔλεγεν· οὐδαμοῦ γὰρ δίκαιον οὐδένα ἡμῖν ἐφάνη ὂν βλάπτειν.
>
> Συγχωρῶ, ἦ δ' ὅς.
>
> Μαχούμεθα ἄρα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, κοινῇ ἐγώ τε καὶ σύ, ἐάν τις αὐτὸ φῇ ἢ Σιμωνίδην ἢ Βίαντα ἢ Πιττακὸν εἰρηκέναι ἤ τιν' ἄλλον τῶν σοφῶν τε καὶ μακαρίων ἀνδρῶν.
>
> Ἐγὼ γοῦν, ἔφη, ἕτοιμός εἰμι κοινωνεῖν τῆς μάχης.
>
> 'So if anyone says it is just to give everyone what is due to him, and if he means by this that what is due from the just man is harm to his enemies, and help to his friends, then whoever said this was not a wise man. What he said was wrong, since we have clearly seen that it is not just to treat anyone badly under any circumstances.'
>
> 'I agree,' he said.
>
> 'Shall we take up arms, then, you and I together, if anyone claims that this is what was said by Simonides, or Bias, or Pittacus, or any other of those wise and blessedly happy men?'
>
> 'I certainly shall,' he said. 'I'm ready to play my part in the battle.' (transl. T. Griffith)

A wise man would not say that it is just to harm one's enemies, and since Simonides was a wise man, he said no such thing. This does not mean that as a wise man Simonides could not be wrong about anything, or that he must have had knowledge about the nature of justice. It only means that as a wise man Simonides must have known enough about justice not to have said that it is just to harm one's enemies. Therefore, Polemarchus' interpretation must be wrong.[22]

In the *Cratylus*, Socrates begins by having Hermogenes agree to the Socratic view that men as a group are wiser than women as a group (392c2-9; cf. *Resp.* 455c-d). Socrates then asks Hermogenes whether Homer also regarded the Trojan men as wiser than the Trojan women (392d5-6). Socrates does not state the principle explicitly (as he does in the *Republic* and in the *Protagoras*), but he is naturally taken as implying that as a wise man Homer must have known that (Trojan) men as a group are wiser than (Trojan) women as a group. Again, this does not mean that Homer was not wrong about anything (Socrates clearly thought he was). It only means that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, Homer can be taken as having known about the relative wisdom of men and women.

Later in this chapter, we shall see Socrates interpreting names in a very similar way. Instead of simply trying to guess what the name means, Socrates uses what is presumed known about the thing named and the name-giver. This involves attributing (presumed) insights to the name-giver in some cases and (presumed) false views in other cases, depending on what seems plausible in the light of what is (presumed) known about the name-giver.

The last step in Socrates' line of reasoning is the conclusion that Homer thought that "Astyanax" was a more correct name than "Skamandrios". What allows Socrates to draw this conclusion? In the second stage (392d11-394d1), of course, Socrates proceeds to inquire into the reason why Homer regarded "Astyanax" as more correct than "Skamandrios". But that is not part of his reasoning in the first stage. At this point, Socrates rather seems to assume Homer's commitment to the general view that comparatively wise people use names more correctly than comparatively unwise people and to conclude from this commitment and the view of Homer as a wise man that it is *more likely than not* that Homer in fact did regard "Astyanax" as more correct than "Skamandrios".

Moving from the first to the second stage, Socrates begins to wonder about Homer's reasons for preferring the name "Astyanax" (392d11-393b6):

> ΣΩ. Σκοπῶμεν δὴ διὰ τί ποτε. ἢ αὐτὸς ἡμῖν κάλλιστα ὑφηγεῖται τὸ διότι; φησὶν γάρ
>
> "οἷος γάρ σφιν ἔρυτο πόλιν καὶ τείχεα μακρά."

[22] In the *Protagoras* (341e-347a, esp. 345c-347a), Socrates confirms his own interpretation of Simonides' *Ode to Scopas* by appeal to the same principle.

διὰ ταῦτα δή, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὀρθῶς ἔχει καλεῖν τὸν τοῦ σωτῆρος υὸν Ἀστυάνακτα τούτου ὃ ἔσῳζεν ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ, ὥς φησιν Ὅμηρος.

ΕΡΜ. Φαίνεταί μοι.

ΣΩ. Τί δή ποτε; οὐ γάρ πω οὐδ' αὐτὸς ἔγωγε μανθάνω, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες· σὺ δὲ μανθάνεις;

ΕΡΜ. Μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἔγωγε.

ΣΩ. Ἀλλ' ἆρα, ὠγαθέ, καὶ τῷ Ἕκτορι αὐτὸς ἔθετο τὸ ὄνομα Ὅμηρος;

ΕΡΜ. Τί δή;

ΣΩ. Ὅτι μοι δοκεῖ καὶ τοῦτο παραπλήσιόν τι εἶναι τῷ Ἀστυάνακτι, καὶ ἔοικεν Ἑλληνικοῖς ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα. ὁ γὰρ "ἄναξ" καὶ ὁ "ἕκτωρ" σχεδόν τι ταὐτὸν σημαίνει, [βασιλικὰ ἀμφότερα εἶναι τὰ ὀνόματα][23]· οὗ γὰρ ἄν τις ἄναξ ᾖ, καὶ ἕκτωρ δήπου ἐστὶν τούτου· δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι κρατεῖ τε αὐτοῦ καὶ κέκτηται καὶ ἔχει αὐτό. ἢ οὐδέν σοι δοκῶ λέγειν, ἀλλὰ λανθάνω καὶ ἐμαυτὸν οἰόμενός τινος ὥσπερ ἴχνους ἐφάπτεσθαι τῆς Ὁμήρου δόξης περὶ ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος;

ΕΡΜ. Μὰ Δί' οὐ σύ γε, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖς, ἀλλὰ ἴσως τοῦ ἐφάπτῃ.

Soc. Now let's see why. Or did he himself most beautifully provide us with the reason? For he says:

"For he alone saved their city and their high walls."

It's for this reason, it seems, that it's correct to call the son of their saviour "Astyanax" (i.e. "City-Lord") of that which his father kept safe, as Homer says.

Her. I think so.

Soc. But why is that? I don't yet understand this, Hermogenes. Do you?

Her. No, I certainly don't.

Soc. But tell me, my friend, did Homer himself also give Hektor his name?

Her. Why do you say that?

Soc. Because I think this name quite closely resembles "Astyanax", and these names seem Greek. For "ruler" and "possessor" almost signify the same; for that of which one is a lord, one is, presumably, also a possessor. For it's clear that one has power over it, has acquired it, and possesses it. Or do you think I'm talking nonsense? Am I tricking even myself into believing that I'm hitting upon some trail, as it were, of Homer's view about the correctness of names?

Her. God no, you of all people are not tricking yourself, I think. You might be onto something.

[23] I follow Stallbaum in deleting this phrase.

Socrates first sketches the possibility of speculating about Homer's reason for preferring the name "Astyanax", but then adds that Homer himself provides the reason (392d11-12). For Socrates, this was probably an important reason for choosing "Astyanax" as his example. If Socrates had started to speculate at this point, the connection to Homer – and thus the appeal to Homer's authority – would be much weaker.

The line adduced by Socrates could be taken as a combination of the lines in Book 6 and Book 22, but it seems equally likely that Socrates is remembering the line in Book 22 as spoken by Homer and not by Andromache. In any case, both in Book 6 and Book 22, the reason for calling Hektor's son "Astyanax" is ascribed to the Trojan men. The thought behind also ascribing this reason to Homer seems to be that since the Trojan men's preference for the name "Astyanax" can be ascribed to Homer (on the basis of the principle that comparatively wise people use names more correctly than comparatively unwise people), the same must be true of their reason for doing so. Therefore, Socrates concludes, according to Homer, "it is correct to call the son of their saviour "City-Lord" of that which his father kept safe" (ὀρθῶς ἔχει καλεῖν τὸν τοῦ σωτῆρος υὸν Ἀστυάνακτα τούτου ὃ ἔσῳζεν ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ). That is, Socrates takes for granted that, for Homer and the Trojan men, calling Hektor's son "Astyanax" is tantamount to calling him "City-Lord". But how does the fact that Hektor protected Troy explain that it is correct to call his son "City-Lord"? We might think that using this public nickname is a way of praising and honouring Hektor himself, and that the correctness of the name is explained by the appropriateness of the praise. But that is not how Socrates approaches the question. Instead he asks whether Homer also gave Hektor his name. This is surprising. Socrates apparently takes for granted that Homer gave Astyanax his name and is now asking whether the same is the case with Hektor. This suggests that Socrates is looking to Homer not just as a cultural authority or as someone with a view about the correctness of names, but as a name-giver. Hermogenes, however, does not seem puzzled by this suggestion. What he wants to know is why Socrates thinks Homer gave Hektor his name. Socrates offers two reasons. First, "Hektor" closely resembles "Astyanax". Second, both names seem Greek. The second reason supports both the first reason and the conclusion. If the two names did not seem Greek, it would be hard to argue that "Hektor" closely resembles "Astyanax", and it would be impossible to argue that Homer gave Hektor his name. On the other hand, Socrates does not seem to want to suggest that Homer must have given Hektor his name simply because the names "Hektor" and "Astyanax" seem Greek. Rather, this is a special case because "Hektor" closely resembles "Astyanax". The idea seems to be that if Homer gave Astyanax his name, and if "Hektor" closely resembles "Astyanax", then most likely Homer also gave Hektor his name.

But why does Socrates think that "Hektor" closely resembles "Astyanax"? Socrates explains that "lord" and "possessor" (or "holder") almost signify the same (ὁ γὰρ "ἄναξ" καὶ ὁ "ἕκτωρ" σχεδόν τι ταὐτὸν σημαίνει), thereby implying that calling someone "Hektor" is tantamount to calling that person "possessor", just as calling someone "Astyanax" is tantamount to calling that person "lord". The reason, Socrates explains, is

that if one is a lord of something, one is also a possessor of that thing (οὗ γὰρ ἄν τις ἄναξ ᾖ, καὶ ἕκτωρ δήπου ἐστὶν τούτου). The idea seems to be that (calling someone) "lord" signifies that the person named is a lord, and that (calling someone) "possessor" signifies that the person named is a possessor. And since being a lord of something implies being a possessor of that thing, the two names almost signify the same. Why only "almost"? One might think the idea is that the entailment only works in one direction, i.e. that being a possessor of something does not imply being a lord of that thing.[24] But I do not think that is the idea. Although the natural translation of ἕκτωρ is "possessor" (or "holder"), the word is not used of possessors in general. In fact, the only relevant surviving evidence of its use is the entry on ἕκτωρ in Hesychius' lexicon which informs us that Sappho used the word of Zeus.[25] Since the Greek tradition consistently describes Zeus as king (among the gods),[26] it would seem that Sappho uses ἕκτωρ as a royal epithet. And if we take Sappho's use as an indication of general usage, we can conclude that being the ἕκτωρ of something really does imply being the ἄναξ of that thing. The real reason why Socrates says that the two names "almost" signify the same is, I suspect, that the two names *appear* to signify something different. However, as Socrates will point out a little later, the two names (and many others) *really* signify exactly the same, *viz.* that the person named is a king (cf. 394c3-4). This points to an important distinction between what we might call "apparent signification" and "real signification". This distinction will soon be made explicit (394a-d), but first Socrates provides some much needed background to his reconstruction of Homer's reasons for preferring the name "Astyanax" (393b-e).

As we have seen, Socrates took a somewhat surprising approach to the question why Homer refers to the fact that Hektor protected Troy as the reason why it is correct to call his son "Astyanax" (i.e. "City-Lord"). First he asked whether Homer also gave Hektor his name, and then he suggested that the names "Astyanax" and "Hektor" closely resemble each other (393a). He has done this, we now learn, because he suspects that he is onto Homer's view about the correctness of names (393b). What does Socrates think he is onto? As a preliminary to his conjecture, Socrates describes a general norm governing the naming of natural species. If an animal (e.g. a horse) begets offspring, the offspring should be called by the name belonging to the species of the parent (e.g. "horse" or "foal") unless, of course, the offspring happens to belong to a different species. In that case, the offspring should be called by the name of the other species (393b-c). Having made this observation, Socrates continues in the following way (394a1-394d1):

> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ βασιλέως ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος; ἔσται γάρ ποτε ἐκ βασιλέως βασιλεύς, καὶ ἐξ ἀγαθοῦ ἀγαθός, καὶ ἐκ καλοῦ καλός, καὶ τἆλλα πάντα οὕτως, ἐξ ἑκάστου γένους ἕτερον τοιοῦτον ἔκγονον, ἐὰν μὴ τέρας

[24] Ademollo 2011: 159.
[25] Lobel and Page 1955: fr. 180.
[26] E.g. Hes. *Theog.* 886, *Op.* 668; Thgn. 1120; Pind. *Nem.* 5.35; Ar. *Av.* 514; *Cra.* 396a.

γίγνηται· κλητέον δὴ ταὐτὰ ὀνόματα. ποικίλλειν δὲ ἔξεστι ταῖς συλλαβαῖς, ὥστε δόξαι ἂν τῷ ἰδιωτικῶς ἔχοντι ἕτερα εἶναι ἀλλήλων τὰ αὐτὰ ὄντα· ὥσπερ ἡμῖν τὰ τῶν ἰατρῶν φάρμακα χρώμασιν καὶ ὀσμαῖς πεποικιλμένα ἄλλα φαίνεται τὰ αὐτὰ ὄντα, τῷ δέ γε ἰατρῷ, ἅτε τὴν δύναμιν τῶν φαρμάκων σκοπουμένῳ, τὰ αὐτὰ φαίνεται, καὶ οὐκ ἐκπλήττεται ὑπὸ τῶν προσόντων. οὕτω δὲ ἴσως καὶ ὁ ἐπιστάμενος περὶ ὀνομάτων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῶν σκοπεῖ, καὶ οὐκ ἐκπλήττεται εἴ τι πρόσκειται γράμμα ἢ μετάκειται ἢ ἀφῄρηται, ἢ καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις παντάπασιν γράμμασίν ἐστιν ἡ τοῦ ὀνόματος δύναμις. ὥσπερ ὃ νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν, "Ἀστυάναξ" τε καὶ "Ἕκτωρ" οὐδὲν τῶν αὐτῶν γραμμάτων ἔχει πλὴν τοῦ ταῦ, ἀλλ' ὅμως ταὐτὸν σημαίνει. καὶ "Ἀρχέπολίς" γε τῶν μὲν γραμμάτων τί ἐπικοινωνεῖ; δηλοῖ δὲ ὅμως τὸ αὐτό· καὶ ἄλλα πολλά ἐστιν ἃ οὐδὲν ἀλλ' ἢ βασιλέα σημαίνει· καὶ ἄλλα γε αὖ στρατηγόν, οἷον "Ἄγις" καὶ "Πολέμαρχος" καὶ "Εὐπόλεμος". καὶ ἰατρικά γε ἕτερα, "Ἰατροκλῆς" καὶ "Ἀκεσίμβροτος"· καὶ ἕτερα ἂν ἴσως συχνὰ εὕροιμεν ταῖς μὲν συλλαβαῖς καὶ τοῖς γράμμασι διαφωνοῦντα, τῇ δὲ δυνάμει ταὐτὸν φθεγγόμενα. φαίνεται οὕτως ἢ οὔ;

ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

Soc. Doesn't the same reasoning also apply to the king? A king will then beget a king, a good man will beget a good man, a beautiful man will beget a beautiful man, and so on with everything else: any given kind will beget separate offspring like itself, unless it begets a monstrosity. Therefore, one should call it the same names. It's possible to vary them with syllables, so that to the layman they appear different from each other, although they are the same. It's like the doctors' drugs which have been varied with different colours and smells – to us they appear different, although they are the same, but to the doctor who examines the power of the drugs they appear the same, and he is not distracted by the things added. In this way, presumably, the person who knows about names examines their power and is not distracted if a letter has been added, transferred, or removed, or if the power of the name is present in completely different letters. It's like what we said just now. "Astyanax" and "Hektor" have none of the same letters except "t", but they still signify the same. And which letters does "Archepolis" share with them? And yet it indicates the same. And there are many others which signify nothing but king. And others again signify general, such as "Agis" and "Polemarchos" and "Eupolemos". And others are names of doctors, "Iatrokles" and "Akesimbrotos". And we can probably find many others which disagree with regard to syllables and letters, but express the same with regard to power. Do you agree or not?

Her. I certainly do.

The passage proceeds in three stages. First, Socrates suggests that the reasoning that applied to the different species of animals and plants also applies to the different kinds

of humans. Therefore, if some human (e.g. a king) begets offspring, the offspring should be called by the same names as the parent (394a1-5). Second, Socrates develops an analogy between names and medical drugs in order to argue that names may seem different (to the non-expert) but really be the same (394a5-b7). Third, Socrates returns to the names "Astyanax" and "Hektor" and claims that they signify exactly the same, even though they have almost no letters in common. The passage ends with the suggestion that the same applies to the names of generals and doctors and many other names (394b7-d1).

We can readily see how this passage is supposed to help explain the initial question why Homer refers to the fact that Hektor protected Troy as the reason why it is correct to call his son "Astyanax" (i.e. "City-Lord"). First, when Homer cites the fact that Hektor protected Troy what he means to say is that Hektor has a kingly nature. Second, when a king begets offspring, the offspring should be called by the same names as the parent (unless the offspring is a monstrosity). Third, "Hektor" and "Astyanax" seem different but really are the same when considered as kingly names. Thus, Homer refers to the fact that Hektor has a kingly nature as the reason why it is correct to call his son a kingly name because, under normal circumstances, a kingly nature is hereditary and the offspring of a king should be called a kingly name just as the father.

It is perhaps not equally obvious how this passage is supposed to convince Hermogenes that the names of human beings are subject to the standards of natural correctness. Even if he accepts the interpretation of Homer's view about the correctness of names, why would he not reject the view itself? For a modern reader, there are at least two obvious objections one could make. The first objection concerns an apparent conflation of animal species and kinds of human beings. Humans do beget offspring with heritable traits, but they do not beget offspring which belong to the same *kind* of humans as themselves – or at least not the kinds mentioned by Socrates (kings, generals, doctors, etc.).[27] As a Socratic, however, Hermogenes is unlikely to share this concern. As we see in the *Republic*, for example, Socrates and the two brothers have no doubt that there are different kinds of human beings, and that humans normally beget offspring of the same kind as themselves. That is the truth, for instance, which underlies the "noble lie" told by Socrates at the end of Book 3 (414b-415c). Indeed, the three main kinds of human beings described in the *Republic* - the rulers, the auxiliaries, and the artisans/farmers - correspond quite neatly to the three kinds mentioned in this passage: kings, generals, and doctors.

The second objection concerns an apparent conflation of designations for kinds and names of individuals. The name of a kind (e.g. "king") might be said to signify

[27] Cf. Ademollo 2011: 161: "Of course, monarchy is often hereditary; but it is not so in the sense in which being a lion or a human or an oak is. While a lion's offspring is itself a lion for sure, unless it is a freak of nature, a king's offspring need not himself be (or become in due course) a king, or - if kingship be a matter not of actually wearing a crown, but rather of having something like a kingly nature - have such a nature."

that what is named is such and such (e.g. a king), but the name of an individual does not signify that what is named is such and such – or at least not in the way described by Socrates (where "Astyanax" signifies that what is named is a king).[28] For example, some modern readers might object that names of individuals only signify (i.e. refer to) the bearer of the name and do not signify anything *about* the bearer, while other modern readers might accept that names of individuals signify something about the bearer, but not in the way proposed by Socrates.[29] It is unsurprising that Hermogenes is convinced that names of individuals signify something about the bearer. After all, Greek poetry is full of passages which treat names as having this kind of significance.[30] But why does Hermogenes not object to the idea that the name of an individual (e.g. "Astyanax") signifies the same as the name of a kind (e.g. "king")? The answer, I think, is that Hermogenes' willingness to conceive of human beings more as *kinds* of human beings than as *individuals* makes him more open to assimilate names of individuals and names of kinds.

Now, Socrates' appeal to Homer's authority is only one part of Socrates' renewed strategy. Another, more explicit, part of the strategy is to respond to Hermogenes' request for a more specific account of natural correctness. In the first part of the dialogue, Socrates offered an account of the name as an instrument for teaching and for separating being (388b13-c1: Ὄνομα ἄρα διδασκαλικόν τί ἐστιν ὄργανον καὶ διακριτικὸν τῆς οὐσίας). He also offered an account of expert name-making according to which the natural correctness of a name depends on the form, rather than the matter, of the name (390a6-8: [...] ἕως ἂν τὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος εἶδος ἀποδιδῷ τὸ προσῆκον ἑκάστῳ ἐν ὁποιαισοῦν συλλαβαῖς [...]). In the present passage, Socrates can be seen as further developing this general account by means of the analogy between names and medical drugs.[31] As we saw in the previous chapter, scholars have generally taken the account of the name as an instrument for teaching and for separating being (387d-388c) to mean that the name teaches (i.e. imparts information about what it names) by separating being (i.e. by designating the thing, by distinguishing the thing from other things, or by analysing the thing).[32] Also, scholars have generally taken the claim that the natural

[28] Cf. Ademollo 2011: 162: "Socrates is speaking of a king begetting a king; but we know that sooner or later he will be driving at Hector's begetting Astyanax. Yet that is a completely different issue [...] A lion's offspring must be called 'lion', all right; but it need not be called 'Lion'. And even if it were true that a king's offspring must be called 'king', it would not yet follow that he must be called 'King'."

[29] Among the former are the "Millians" (so-called after John Stuart Mill), and among the latter are the "descriptivists". See Cumming, Sam. "Names." In The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2013., 2013. http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/names/.

[30] The most famous example is perhaps the use of Helen's name in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (681-690). Cf. Raeburn and Thomas 2011: note ad loc. and "Introduction" (l-li)

[31] Some scholars, e.g. Norman Kretzmann and Francesco Ademollo, believe (wrongly, in my view) that the present passage and its notion of power (δύναμις) supersedes, rather than develops, the notion of the name as consisting of form and matter. Cf. Kretzmann 1971: 133; Ademollo 2011: 171-2.

[32] Sedley 2003: 59-61; Ademollo 2011: 111.

correctness of a name depends on its form rather than its matter (389a-390a) to mean that two names (in two different languages) consisting of entirely different syllables can be equally correct by virtue of having the appropriate form.[33] In accordance with this interpretation of the general account in the first part of the dialogue, David Sedley takes the analogy between medical drugs and names to mean that names (in the same language) consisting of entirely different syllables can have the same power (and hence be the same), although they appear to be different to the non-expert.[34] Further, Sedley identifies this "power of names" as the capacity to teach by means of separating being.[35] As David Sedley develops this idea, two names have the same power if and only if they signify the same thing; and two names signify the same thing if and only if they separate the being of the same thing; and two names separate the being of the same thing, if and only if they designate the same thing. That is, two names may analyse (i.e. describe) the being of the same thing in two different ways (i.e. have different intensions) and yet have the same power, because they designate the same thing (i.e. have the same extension).[36]

Now, since I have a different interpretation of the general account in the first part of the dialogue, it should come as no surprise that I have a different interpretation of the present passage. As I tried to show in the previous chapter, the name is defined as an instrument for teaching, not in the sense that the name can teach, but in the sense that the highest purpose of the name is to be used in teaching (conceived, not as an imparting of information, but as a turning of the soul). Further, the name is defined as an instrument for separating being, not in the sense that the name can separate one thing (or kind) from another, but in the sense that the name has both the *syntactical* function of separating the beings of things which the sentence combines and the *representational* function of representing separately the being of something which the sentence represents in combination with the being of something else. Finally, the natural correctness of a name depends on its form rather than its matter (389a-390a), not just in the sense that two names (in two different languages) consisting of *entirely different* syllables can be equally correct by virtue of having the appropriate form, but also in the sense that two names (in two different languages) consisting of syllables *of whatever kind* can be equally correct by virtue of having the appropriate form.

In the light of this interpretation of the general account in the first part of the dialogue, how should we understand the analogy between medical drugs and names in the present passage? As mentioned earlier, Socrates develops the analogy in order to argue that names may seem different (to the non-expert) but really be the same. As Socrates initially puts the point: "It's possible to vary them [sc. the names] with syllables, so that to the layman they appear different from each other, although they are

[33] Sedley 2003: 81-83; Ademollo 2011: 135-7.
[34] Sedley 2003: 83, 130.
[35] Sedley 2003: 81.
[36] Sedley 2003: 84-6.

the same" (394a5-7: ποικίλλειν δὲ ἔξεστι ταῖς συλλαβαῖς, ὥστε δόξαι ἂν τῷ ἰδιωτικῶς ἔχοντι ἕτερα εἶναι ἀλλήλων τὰ αὐτὰ ὄντα). The general idea seems clear enough, but how we understand the exact point being made will depend on how we understand the first part of the sentence (ποικίλλειν δὲ ἔξεστι ταῖς συλλαβαῖς). At least two different interpretations seem possible. On the first interpretation, Socrates assumes that the syllables making up the name are somehow part of its identity, but wants to point out that two names consisting of different syllables (e.g. "Hektor" and "Astyanax") can be the same name. On this construal, it would be natural to take the dative of ταῖς συλλαβαῖς as a dative of respect and translate "it's possible to vary them with regard to their syllables", or even "it's possible to vary their syllables". In that case, the idea would seem to be that *even though* syllables are part of the identity of the name, it is possible to vary them without changing the identity of the name. On the second interpretation, Socrates assumes that *the layman* regards the syllables making up the name as part of its identity, but wants to point out that two names consisting of different syllables (e.g. "Hektor" and "Astyanax") can be the same name. On this construal, it would be natural to take the dative of ταῖς συλλαβαῖς as a dative of means and translate "it's possible to vary them with syllables", or even "it's possible to adorn them with syllables". In that case, the idea would seem to be that *because* syllables are *not* part of the identity of the name, it is possible to vary them without changing the identity of the name.

Scholars seem committed to the first of these two possible interpretations (although a clear distinction between the two options is rarely, if ever, made).[37] But which interpretation does the analogy between medical drugs and names suggest? Socrates explains that medical drugs which are varied (or adorned) with colours and smells (χρώμασιν καὶ ὀσμαῖς πεποικιλμένα) appear different to "us" (ἡμῖν) even if they are the same, but to the doctor, "since he examines the power of the drugs" (ἅτε τὴν δύναμιν τῶν φαρμάκων σκοπουμένῳ), they appear the same, "and he is not distracted by the things added" (καὶ οὐκ ἐκπλήττεται ὑπὸ τῶν προσόντων). "In this way, presumably," Socrates continues, "the person who knows about names examines their power and is not distracted if a letter has been added, transferred, or removed, or if the power of the name is present in completely different letters." (οὕτω δὲ ἴσως καὶ ὁ ἐπιστάμενος περὶ ὀνομάτων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῶν σκοπεῖ, καὶ οὐκ ἐκπλήττεται εἴ τι πρόσκειται γράμμα ἢ μετάκειται ἢ ἀφῄρηται, ἢ καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις παντάπασιν γράμμασίν ἐστιν ἡ τοῦ ὀνόματος δύναμις). If one wanted to defend the first interpretative option, one would naturally focus on the description of names, and more specifically on the idea that the expert on names can recognize that two names are the same name even if the power of the name is present in completely different letters. Although this description does not deliver particular support for the first interpretative option, at least it seems to be consistent with the view that what Socrates wants to point out is that *even though* syllables are part of the identity of the name, it is possible to vary them (and even use completely

[37] Sedley 2003: 130; Ademollo 2011: 168.

different letters) without changing the identity of the name. However, if one wanted to defend the second interpretative option, one would naturally focus on the description of medical drugs, and more specifically on the idea that the doctor can recognize that two drugs are the same drug even if the drugs have been varied (or adorned) with different colours and smells. In this case, the point is clearly that *because* colours and smells are *not* part of the identity of the drug (i.e. because they are an accidental and not an essential part of the drug), it is possible to vary them (and even use completely different colours and smells) without changing the identity of the drug. And since colours and smells (in the case of medical drugs) and syllables (in the case of names) have analogous roles in the two descriptions, it seems clear that what Socrates wants to point out is that *because* syllables are *not* part of the identity of the name (i.e. because they are an accidental and not an essential part of the name), it is possible to vary them (and even use completely different letters) without changing the identity of the name.

In this passage, Socrates assumes that the identity of medical drugs is constituted by their "power" ([…] τῷ δέ γε ἰατρῷ, ἅτε τὴν δύναμιν τῶν φαρμάκων σκοπουμένῳ, τὰ αὐτὰ φαίνεται). In a medical context, this power is, it seems, the capacity to affect the human body in some way.[38] The analogy between medical drugs and names suggests that the identity of names also is constituted by their "power" (cf. 394b3-4: οὕτω δὲ ἴσως καὶ ὁ ἐπιστάμενος περὶ ὀνομάτων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῶν σκοπεῖ […]). But what is the power of names? In the final part of the passage, Socrates returns to the names "Astyanax" and "Hektor" and claims that they signify exactly the same (394b7-c1: ὥσπερ ὃ νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν, "Ἀστυάναξ" τε καὶ "Ἕκτωρ" οὐδὲν τῶν αὐτῶν γραμμάτων ἔχει πλὴν τοῦ ταῦ, ἀλλ' ὅμως ταὐτὸν σημαίνει). This makes it quite clear that the power of names is, roughly speaking, the capacity to signify something. But what is this power more specifically? And what is the relation between this idea and the account of the name as an instrument for teaching and for separating being? We can begin with the simple observation that the person who knows about names and how to examine their power must be the expert user, i.e. the dialectician (cf. 390b1-d7) who, as we saw in the previous chapter, is identical with the teacher. Now, in the *Republic*, Socrates implies that teaching – and education (παιδεία) more broadly – is to be understood as a healing of the soul. That is, Socrates describes the aim of teaching as virtue and virtue as a state of health of the soul (cf. *Resp.* 444a-e). This would seem to suggest that the power of names and the power of drugs do not just have in common that (sometimes) only the expert can tell what the power really is. Rather, it seems that the power of names is somehow analogous to the power of drugs. And since the power of drugs is, roughly speaking, the capacity to affect the human body in some way, it would seem that the power of names is, roughly speaking, the capacity to affect the human soul in some way. This suggests that the capacity to signify something should be understood as the capacity to affect the soul in some way. Since teaching is a way of affecting the soul, we might be tempted to identify the capacity to signify something with the capacity

[38] For the notion of δύναμις in Hippocratic medicine, cf. Plamböck 1964.

to teach. But that would be a mistake. The analogous case of drugs makes this clear. The power of drugs is the capacity to affect the body in some way, but even though the capacity to heal is a capacity to affect the body in some way, Socrates, I believe, would never describe the power of drugs as having the capacity to heal. Rather, the fact that drugs have the capacity to affect the body is the reason why the doctor can use them to heal the body. Analogously, the fact that names have the capacity to affect the soul is the reason why the teacher can use them to heal the soul.

But would it then be correct to identify the capacity to signify something with the capacity to separate being? While it is difficult to see the connection between the capacity to signify something and the *syntactical* function of the name, there is obviously some connection between the capacity to signify something and the *representional* function of the name. But it would be wrong to identify the two. The reason is that separating being – as the function of the name – is the correctness criterion of the name. In other words, the name of something is correct if and only if the name separates the being of that thing. If we identified the capacity to separate being with the capacity to signify something, we would be forced to accept that any name that signifies something about a given thing separates the being of that thing (and hence is a correct name of that thing), or, conversely, that any name which does not separate the being of what it names (and hence is an incorrect name) does not signify anything about that thing. This would make the notion of an incorrect name unintelligible. However, later in the dialogue (429b-435d), Socrates makes it a major point that there must be incorrect names. For this reason, we should interpret the present passage in a way that allows for the distinction between correct and incorrect names. The natural way to do this is to understand the capacity to signify something as more fundamental than the capacity to separate being. That is, we should treat both correct and incorrect names as having the capacity to signify something, but only correct names as having the capacity to separate the being of what they name. But how should we understand the relation between the capacity to signify something and the capacity to separate being?

### 2.2.2 The names of the Tantalids and Euthyphro's wisdom (394d2-397c3)

Having shown that the names "Hektor" and "Astyanax" accord with the principle that things that come into being in accordance with nature should be given the same names (394d2-3: Τοῖς μὲν δὴ κατὰ φύσιν γιγνομένοις τὰ αὐτὰ ἀποδοτέον ὀνόματα), Socrates turns his focus to the related principle that things that come into being against nature (παρὰ φύσιν) should be given the name of the kind to which they themselves belong (394d5-10). As examples of this principle, Socrates points to the names of Orestes and Agamemnon (394e8-395b2). Then, having begun retracing the genealogy of the Tantalids, Socrates treats the names of Atreus, Pelops, and Tantalos himself (395b2-e5) before turning to the names of their divine ancestors: Zeus, Kronos, and Ouranos

(395e5-396c3). The examination of these names Socrates attributes to the wisdom of Euthyphro whom he met earlier on the same day (396c3-397a4). Then, at the end of the section, Socrates concludes that they have "come upon some sort of model" (ἐπειδήπερ εἰς τύπον τινὰ ἐμβεβήκαμεν) which they can use in their further inquiry – an inquiry which should no longer concern the names of heroes and humans, but rather the names of "eternal and natural things" (397a5-c3).

How can we understand this development as part of Socrates' attempt to convince Hermogenes that there is a natural correctness of names? In the previous subsection, we saw how Socrates used the appeal to Homer's authority to show Hermogenes that the names of Hektor and Astyanax are naturally correct. We also saw how Socrates, while doing this, provided a more *specific* account of natural correctness. In this subsection, we shall see how Socrates – without appeal to the authority of Homer or any other poet – shows Hermogenes that the names of the Tantalids and their divine ancestors are naturally correct. Also, we shall see how Socrates, while doing this, prepares the way for the more *concrete* account of natural correctness which consists in the subsequent inquiry into particular Greek names (397c4-421c2).

At the beginning of this section of the dialogue, as mentioned above, Socrates turns his focus to the principle that the people who come into being against nature (παρὰ φύσιν) should be given the name of the kind to which they themselves belong (394d5-10). More specifically, Socrates explains, the son of a pious man who is born (or has become) impious should be given the name of the kind to which he himself belongs (394e1-2: Καὶ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ εὐσεβοῦς ἄρα γενομένῳ ἀσεβεῖ τὸ τοῦ γένους ὄνομα ἀποδοτέον). As examples of this principle, Socrates points to the names of Orestes and Agamemnon (394e8-395b2):

> ΣΩ. Ὥσπερ γε καὶ ὁ "Ὀρέστης," ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, κινδυνεύει ὀρθῶς ἔχειν, εἴτε τις τύχη ἔθετο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα εἴτε καὶ ποιητής τις, τὸ θηριῶδες τῆς φύσεως καὶ τὸ ἄγριον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὀρεινὸν ἐνδεικνύμενος τῷ ὀνόματι.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Φαίνεται οὕτως, ὦ Σώκρατες.
>
> ΣΩ. Ἔοικεν δέ γε καὶ τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ κατὰ φύσιν τὸ ὄνομα εἶναι.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Φαίνεται.
>
> ΣΩ. Κινδυνεύει γὰρ τοιοῦτός τις εἶναι ὁ "Ἀγαμέμνων," οἷος ἃ δόξειεν αὐτῷ διαπονεῖσθαι καὶ καρτερεῖν τέλος ἐπιτιθεὶς τοῖς δόξασι δι' ἀρετήν. σημεῖον δὲ αὐτοῦ ἡ ἐν Τροίᾳ μονὴ τοῦ πλήθους τε καὶ καρτερία. ὅτι οὖν ἀγαστὸς κατὰ τὴν ἐπιμονὴν οὗτος ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐνσημαίνει τὸ ὄνομα ὁ "Ἀγαμέμνων."

> Soc. "Orestes", for example, seems to be correct, Hermogenes, whether chance of some kind gave him the name or some poet did, showing in the name the brutal element of his nature and the wild and mountainous part of him.
>
> Her. It seems so, Socrates.

> Soc. And his father also seems to have his name in accordance with nature.
>
> Her. Yes.
>
> Soc. For "Agamemnon" seems to be the kind of man who works hard and endures the things he has decided, bringing his plans to completion because of his virtue. A sign of this is that the people endured and stayed in Troy. Thus, that this man is admirable for his steadfastness is what the name "Agamemnon" signifies.

Socrates claims that the name "Orestes" is naturally correct because it shows the brutal nature of Orestes (394e8-11), and that the name "Agamemnon" is naturally correct because it signifies the admirable steadfastness of Agamemnon (395a2-b2). But what is the reasoning behind these claims? And what is the connection with the newly formulated principle? In the previous subsection, we saw that Socrates sometimes makes use of the interpretative assumption that if some poet (e.g. Simonides or Homer) is known to be wise, the poet must have had some supposed insight (e.g. that it is not just to harm anyone, or that men as a group are wiser than women as a group). In the present passage, Socrates applies a different interpretative assumption which does not make reference to the poet or, in this case, the name-maker. The idea, in essence, is to interpret the signification of some name on the basis of what we know (or think we know) about the bearer of the name. In this passage, we see the use of this assumption most clearly in the interpretation of the name "Agamemnon". First, Socrates states what he takes the name "Agamemnon" to say about the kind of man who bears it (395a5-7: Κινδυνεύει γὰρ τοιοῦτός τις εἶναι ὁ "Ἀγαμέμνων," οἷος ἃ δόξειεν αὐτῷ διαπονεῖσθαι καὶ καρτερεῖν τέλος ἐπιτιθεὶς τοῖς δόξασι δι' ἀρετήν). Then, Socrates gives a reason for this statement by pointing out that the Greek army in Troy stayed and endured the war (395a7-8: σημεῖον δὲ αὐτοῦ ἡ ἐν Τροίᾳ μονὴ τοῦ πλήθους τε καὶ καρτερία). Finally, Socrates concludes that the name "Agamemnon" signifies that Agamemnon is admirable for his steadfastness (395a8-b2: ὅτι οὖν ἀγαστὸς κατὰ τὴν ἐπιμονὴν οὗτος ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐνσημαίνει τὸ ὄνομα ὁ "Ἀγαμέμνων."). That is, Socrates takes the name to consist of two parts and associates the first part ("Ἀγα-") with the Greek word ἀγαστός and the second part ("-μέμνων") with the Greek words μονή and ἐπιμονή.

We can readily see how this construal would make sense to a speaker of ancient Greek, even if modern etymologists regard another etymological construal as more probable.[39] But we might wonder how Socrates knows that the first part of the name ("Ἀγα-") should not instead be associated with the Greek word ἄγαν? Since the meaning of ἄγαν is "much" or "too much", the name "Agamemnon" would then signify that Agamemnon is very or too steadfast. This would correspond better to the view of Agamemnon in contemporary Homeric scholarship where he is generally regarded,

[39] Beekes 2010 s.v. Ἀγαμέμνων writes: "Since Prellwitz [...], a pre-form *Ἀγα-μέδ-μων has been assumed, with the root of μέδομαι." Beekes also reports an alternative etymology: "Kretschmer [...] connected the second part with μένος and μένειν (which von Kamptz finds improbable [...]) [...]."

not as admirable, but as morally bad or even, in the words of Oliver Taplin, "a nasty piece of work".[40] However, as we learn in the *Symposium* (174b-c), this is not at all how Socrates views Agamemnon. According to Socrates, Homer portrays Agamemnon as superior to his brother Menelaus and "as an exceptionally good man with regard to warfare".[41] Also, in Book 3 of the *Republic* (389d-390a), Socrates criticises Achilles for his insolent behaviour towards Agamemnon who is presented as the commander-in-chief of the Greek army.[42] We can now see how Socrates can justify his interpretation of the name "Agamemnon" by pointing out that the Greek army in Troy stayed and endured the war (395a7-8). According to Socrates, the endurance of the army was due to the admirable steadfastness of their commander, Agamemnon. Thus, on the basis of what he knows (or thinks he knows) about Agamemnon, Socrates is led to interpret the name "Agamemnon" as signifying someone admirable and virtuous rather than someone excessive and morally bad.

In the interpretation of the name "Orestes", Socrates seems to be applying the same kind of reasoning, albeit less explicitly. Socrates connects "Orestes" with the Greek word ὀρεινός, meaning "mountaineous" or "belonging to the mountains". This connection makes good sense from the point of view of ancient Greek, especially if we consider the poetic alternative to ὀρεινός, viz. ὀρέστερος. But how does Socrates know that the name also signifies brutality (τὸ θηριῶδες) and wildness (τὸ ἄγριον)? Of course, in the ancient Greek imagination, mountains are often associated with these qualities. Obvious examples are the stories about the Centaurs or about Artemis. But, as Richard Buxton points out, shepherds, wood-cutters, and hunters also populate the mountains of the Greek imagination.[43] An interesting example is Plato's own *Laws*. At the beginning of Book 3, the Athenian proposes to develop an account of the origin of society. According to this account, large-scale natural events such as plagues or floods occur in some kind of cosmic cycle, destroying the majority of the human population and leaving the few survivors in a pre-societal state (677a). In the event of the flood, the Athenian explains, the few survivors "must have been nearly all mountain shepherds" (677b1-2: […] σχεδὸν ὄρειοί τινες ἂν εἶεν νομῆς). These mountain shepherds only possessed the basic forms of expertise needed for survival: shepherding, hunting, house-building, weaving, and pottery (678e-679b). For this reason, they were neither poor (since they could provide for themselves) nor rich (since they did not know how to work metals). The Athenian continues (679b7-c8):

> ᾗ δ' ἄν ποτε συνοικίᾳ μήτε πλοῦτος συνοικῇ μήτε πενία, σχεδὸν ἐν ταύτῃ

[40] Taplin 1990: 65. As regards the view of Agamemnon as morally bad in contemporary Homeric scholarship, Taplin himself refers to Silk 1987: 85; Griffin 1980: 70-73; Schadewaldt 1938: 37-39.

[41] *Symp.* 174b7-c1: ποιήσας γὰρ [sc. Ὅμηρος] τὸν Ἀγαμέμνονα διαφερόντως ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα τὰ πολεμικά, τὸν δὲ Μενέλεων "μαλθακὸν αἰχμητήν."

[42] That Plato had a more complex view of Agamemnon is indicated by a passage in Book 4 of the *Laws* (706d) in which the Athenian approvingly cites Odysseus' criticism of Agamemnon for ordering the ships to be put to sea (*Iliad*, xiv. 96-102).

[43] Buxton 1992.

> γενναιότατα ἤθη γίγνοιτ' ἄν· οὔτε γὰρ ὕβρις οὔτ' ἀδικία, ζῆλοί τε αὖ καὶ φθόνοι οὐκ ἐγγίγνονται. ἀγαθοὶ μὲν δὴ διὰ ταῦτά τε ἦσαν καὶ διὰ τὴν λεγομένην εὐήθειαν· ἃ γὰρ ἤκουον καλὰ καὶ αἰσχρά, εὐήθεις ὄντες ἡγοῦντο ἀληθέστατα λέγεσθαι καὶ ἐπείθοντο. Ψεῦδος γὰρ ὑπονοεῖν οὐδεὶς ἠπίστατο διὰ σοφίαν, ὥσπερ τὰ νῦν, ἀλλὰ περὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων τὰ λεγόμενα ἀληθῆ νομίζοντες ἔζων κατὰ ταῦτα· διόπερ ἦσαν τοιοῦτοι παντάπασιν οἵους αὐτοὺς ἡμεῖς ἄρτι διεληλύθαμεν.
>
> Now a community which has no communion with either poverty or wealth is generally the one in which the noblest characters will be formed; for in it there is no place for the growth of insolence and injustice, of rivalries and jealousies. So these men were good, both for these reasons and because of their simpled-mindedness, as it is called: for, being simple-minded, when they heard things called bad or good, they took what was said for gospel-truth and believed it. For none of them had the shrewdness of the modern man to suspect a falsehood; but they accepted as true the statements made about gods and men, and ordered their lives by them. Thus they were entirely of the character we have just described (transl. R.G. Bury).

Thus, for Plato the mountains are not just associated with brutality and wildness, but also with moderation and simple virtue.[44] It would seem, then, that Socrates could only interpret the name "Orestes" as signifying someone brutal and wild (rather than someone simple and virtuous) because he knows (or thinks he knows) some relevant fact about Orestes. In the Greek tradition as a whole, Orestes is best known for killing his own mother, Clytemnestra, in revenge of her murder of his father, Agamemnon. It seems safe to assume that the matricide is also what is on Socrates' mind in this passage. But how does Socrates connect the matricide with brutality and wildness? Socrates might be thinking that the act of matricide must have changed Orestes and given him a brutal and wild nature (even if he did not possess such a nature before the act). The stories about Orestes' frenzied wanderings after he killed his mother gives some support to this interpretation.[45] Alternatively, Socrates might be thinking that, in order to be capable of committing such an act, Orestes must have already had a brutal and wild nature (rather than a simple and virtuous character). The original formulation of the principle, especially its emphasis on birth, lends support to this interpretation (cf. 394d5-9). However, the notion that Orestes - as the son of a good father - is *born* with a bad nature seems to go against Socrates' general theory in the *Republic* that kings and tyrants are born with the same nature and are only corrupted by the environment

[44] The same line of thought reappears in Book 4 of the *Laws* (704c), where the location of the city is considered.

[45] Parker 1983: 386-388 (referring to Eur. *El.* 1273-5, *Or.* 1643-5) to which add, e.g., Paus. 8.34.

in which they grow up.[46] I believe this is why Socrates says that Orestes has been given his name by chance or by some poet. The idea is that Agamemnon could not have foreseen that Orestes would grow up to become a bad person, so if Agamemnon did give Orestes this name it was somehow without intending it to signify brutality and wildness and in this sense Orestes was given his name by chance. Alternatively, Orestes was given a different name by Agamemnon, and it was only the later poetic tradition which - with the benefit of hindsight - was able to give Orestes a name which signifies the brutal and wild man that he became first when his mother was killed by his father, and then when he himself killed his own mother.

But in any case, we can see that his (presumed) knowledge about Orestes' matricide is what leads Socrates to associate the mountaineous element of Orestes' nature with brutality and wildness rather than moderation and simple virtue.

This gives us some idea about the reasoning behind Socrates' claims about the signification of the names "Orestes" and "Agamemnon". But what is the connection between these names and the newly formulated principle? As we saw above, the names were introduced to illustrate the principle that the son of a pious man who is born (or has become) impious should be given the name of the kind to which he himself belongs (394e1-2: Καὶ τῷ ἐκ τοῦ εὐσεβοῦς ἄρα γενομένῳ ἀσεβεῖ τὸ τοῦ γένους ὄνομα ἀποδοτέον). In the case of Orestes, we can see how the matricide makes him a clear example of an impious man, and how the name "Orestes" (signifying brutality and wildness) can serve as a good example of a name of an impious man. In the case of Agamemnon, however, it is less clear what makes him a good example of a pious man, and how the name "Agamemnon" (signifying admirable steadfastness) can serve as a good example of a name of a pious man. Of course, Socrates ascribes virtue to Agamemnon, but the virtue in question seems to be bravery rather than piety, just as the name "Agamemnon" seems to be a better name of a brave man than of a pious man. In order to explain this, let us begin by recalling the original formulation of the principle (394d5-9):

> ΣΩ. Τί δὲ τοῖς παρὰ φύσιν, οἳ ἂν ἐν τέρατος εἴδει γένωνται; οἷον ὅταν ἐξ ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ καὶ θεοσεβοῦς ἀσεβὴς γένηται, ἆρ' οὐχ ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἔμπροσθεν, κἂν ἵππος βοὸς ἔκγονον τέκῃ, οὐ τοῦ τεκόντος δήπου ἔδει τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ γένους οὗ εἴη;
>
> Soc. What about the people that come into being against nature, i.e. those that become part of the group of monstrosities? For example, when a good and pious man begets an impious son, isn't it like the previous examples – that if a horse begets the offspring of an oxen, it should not have the name of the begetter, but of the kind to which it belongs?

[46] This is the general theory (*Resp.* 489d-497a). Socrates holds that moral potential and the conventional goods (such as beauty and wealth) can contribute to the corruption of one's nature, but only if the general environment has a corrupting effect as well (491a-492c).

Socrates describes the man in this example as good and pious. How are we to understand that description? We might think that Socrates describes the man as morally good and then explains what specific kind of goodness he means to ascribe to him, namely piety. Alternatively, we might think that Socrates describes the man as morally good in general and then specifies the kind of goodness that will be relevant in this context, namely piety. If this were not a Socratic context, I would find the first option at least as convincing as the second option. But since this is a Socratic context, I find the second option more convincing, for the following reasons.

One of the most well-known Socratic views, both among ancient philosophers and in modern scholarship, is the thesis about the unity of virtue.[47] According to (one interpretation of) this thesis, moral virtues such as self-control, bravery, justice, and piety are all in reality one single moral virtue. The thesis comes up in several dialogues, especially the *Protagoras*, *Meno*, and *Gorgias*. Here is what Socrates says in the *Gorgias*, in a monologue which pretends to be a conversation with Callicles (507a5-c7):

> Λέγω δὴ ὅτι, εἰ ἡ σώφρων ἀγαθή ἐστιν, ἡ τοὐναντίον τῇ σώφρονι πεπονθυῖα κακή ἐστιν· ἦν δὲ αὕτη ἡ ἄφρων τε καὶ ἀκόλαστος. — Πάνυ γε. — Καὶ μὴν ὅ γε σώφρων τὰ προσήκοντα πράττοι ἂν καὶ περὶ θεοὺς καὶ περὶ ἀνθρώπους· οὐ γὰρ ἂν σωφρονοῖ τὰ μὴ προσήκοντα πράττων; — Ἀνάγκη ταῦτ' εἶναι οὕτω. — Καὶ μὴν περὶ μὲν ἀνθρώπους τὰ προσήκοντα πράττων δίκαι' ἂν πράττοι, περὶ δὲ θεοὺς ὅσια· τὸν δὲ τὰ δίκαια καὶ ὅσια πράττοντα ἀνάγκη δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον εἶναι. — Ἔστι ταῦτα. — Καὶ μὲν δὴ καὶ ἀνδρεῖόν γε ἀνάγκη· οὐ γὰρ δὴ σώφρονος ἀνδρός ἐστιν οὔτε διώκειν οὔτε φεύγειν ἃ μὴ προσήκει, ἀλλ' ἃ δεῖ καὶ πράγματα καὶ ἀνθρώπους καὶ ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας φεύγειν καὶ διώκειν, καὶ ὑπομένοντα καρτερεῖν ὅπου δεῖ· ὥστε πολλὴ ἀνάγκη, ὦ Καλλίκλεις, τὸν σώφρονα, ὥσπερ διήλθομεν, δίκαιον ὄντα καὶ ἀνδρεῖον καὶ ὅσιον, ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα εἶναι τελέως, τὸν δὲ ἀγαθὸν εὖ τε καὶ καλῶς πράττειν ἃ ἂν πράττῃ, τὸν δ' εὖ πράττοντα μακάριόν τε καὶ εὐδαίμονα εἶναι, τὸν δὲ πονηρὸν καὶ κακῶς πράττοντα ἄθλιον· οὗτος δ' ἂν εἴη ὁ ἐναντίως ἔχων τῷ σώφρονι, ὁ ἀκόλαστος, ὃν σὺ ἐπῄνεις.

> Very well. I say that if the self-controlled soul is good, the soul affected in the opposite way to the self-controlled soul is bad. And this was the foolish, undisciplined soul. — Absolutely. — Furthermore, the self-controlled person would do what was appropriate both in his dealings with the gods and in his dealings with men. After all, he wouldn't be self-controlled if he did what was not appropriate. — Necessarily so. — Now, surely, doing what was appropriate in his dealings with men would mean doing what is just, in his dealings with the gods doing what is pious. And the person

[47] Brickhouse and Smith 2010: 154-167 discuss diffent interpretations of the Socratic view about the unity of virtue.

> who does what is just and pious must necessarily be just and pious. — That is so. — And brave in addition. He must be. After all, it is not the act of a self-controlled man either to pursue or to run away, where that is not appropriate, but rather to run away and pursue whatever – things, people, pleasures, pains – he should run away from and pursue, and endure and stand his ground where he has to. So the inescapable conclusion, Callicles, is that the self-controlled person, as we have described him – just, brave, and pious – must be a completely good man, and that the good man must do the things he does well and admirably, and that the person who does well must be blessed and happy, whereas the wicked person, the one who does badly, is wretched. And he would be the one who is the opposite of the self-controlled person – the undisciplined person you were praising (transl. T. Griffith; revised).

According to Socrates, the man who possesses self-control must also possess justice, piety, bravery, and, more generally, complete moral goodness. This commitment to the unity of virtue makes it likely that, in the present passage of the *Cratylus*, Socrates describes the man as morally good in general and then specifies the kind of moral goodness that will be relevant in this context, namely piety. And even if we take Socrates as only describing the man as possessing a specific kind of moral goodness (namely piety), we must still take Socrates as also ascribing to him moral goodness in general, given his commitment to the unity of virtue. So what does this mean for our interpretation of the principle? Since the specific moral virtues (self-control, bravery, justice, piety, etc.) are all in reality one general moral virtue, it seems natural to infer that names signifying specific moral virtues in reality signify one general moral virtue. Thus, the principle does not distinguish between specific virtues and vices, but only between general virtue and general vice. This should help us explain how Agamemnon can serve as a good example of the principle. Since Agamemnon possesses bravery, he also possesses general moral virtue, including piety. Thus, Agamemnon begetting Orestes is in fact an example of a pious man begetting an impious son. As regards the name "Agamemnon", we might find it particularly appropriate that the name signifies bravery. But the important thing – the thing that makes the name naturally correct – is the fact that the name signifies moral virtue.

Having shown that the names of Orestes and Agamemnon accord with the new principle, Socrates proceeds to treat the names of their paternal ancestors: Atreus, Pelops, and Tantalos (395b2-e5). In each case, Socrates uses what he knows (or thinks he knows) about the bearer of the name to understand what the name signifies.

In the case of Atreus, Socrates refers to the killing of his step-brother, Chrysippos, and the savage treatment of his brother and rival for the throne of Argos, Thyestes, to whom he served up a dinner made from the flesh of his own sons. "All these things", Socrates explains, "ruined and destroyed his virtue" (395b4-5: πάντα ταῦτα ζημιώδη καὶ ἀτηρὰ πρὸς ἀρετήν). Not everyone can see how the name "Atreus" indicates the

nature of Atreus, but the name-experts are able to understand that the name signifies unyieldingness, fearlessness and destructiveness, and that this makes "Atreus" a correct name of Atreus in every way (395b8-c2: καὶ γὰρ κατὰ τὸ ἀτειρὲς καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἄτρεστον καὶ κατὰ τὸ ἀτηρὸν πανταχῇ ὀρθῶς αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα κεῖται).

In the case of Pelops, Socrates claims that the name "Pelops" is naturally correct because it signifies someone who (only) sees what is in front of him (395c2-4: δοκεῖ δέ μοι καὶ τῷ Πέλοπι τὸ ὄνομα ἐμμέτρως κεῖσθαι· σημαίνει γὰρ τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα τὸν τὰ ἐγγὺς ὁρῶντα). Prompted by Hermogenes to explain his interpretation, Socrates refers to the story about Pelops defeating Oenomaos, the king of Pisa, in a chariot-race and winning the hand of his daughter, Hippodameia. In one version of the story, Oenomaos' charioteer, Myrtilos, sabotaged the king's chariot and thereby helped Pelops win the race, but on the way back from the race, Pelops threw Myrtilos into the sea and killed him.[48] According to Socrates, Pelops was unable to take thought for the future and understand that his killing of Myrtilos would result in the greatest misfortune for his whole family. He only saw what was right in front of him – his desire to marry Hippodameia by any means necessary (395d1-3: τὸ ἐγγὺς μόνον ὁρῶν καὶ τὸ παραχρῆμα—τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ "πέλας"—ἡνίκα προεθυμεῖτο λαβεῖν παντὶ τρόπῳ τὸν τῆς Ἱπποδαμείας γάμον). What is the connection between the killing of Myrtilos and the misfortunes of the Pelopids? Socrates does not say, but according to Sophocles' *Electra* (505-15) and Euripides' *Orestes* (988-96), Myrtilos cursed Pelops as he died, thereby causing great misfortune for his descendants all the way down to the time of Electra and Orestes.[49] We shall return shortly to this theme of an ancestral curse.

In the case of Tantalos, Socrates claims that anyone will believe that the name "Tantalos" is naturally correct, "if the things people tell about him are true" (395d3-5: τῷ δὲ Ταντάλῳ καὶ πᾶς ἂν ἡγήσαιτο τοὔνομα ὀρθῶς καὶ κατὰ φύσιν τεθῆναι εἰ ἀληθῆ τὰ περὶ αὐτὸν λεγόμενα). "And what things are that?", Hermogenes wants to know (395d6). When he was alive, Socrates explains, Tantalos experienced many terrible misfortunes, culminating in the downfall of his native land. Then, after his death, Tantalos found himself in Hades with a stone hanging over his head (395d7-e1). In view of all this misery, Socrates concludes, it is just as if someone wanted to name him "Talantatos" (i.e. "most wretched"), but decided to conceal the name and called him "Tantalos" instead (395e1-5: καὶ ἀτεχνῶς ἔοικεν, ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις βουλόμενος ταλάντατον ὀνομάσαι ἀποκρυπτόμενος ὀνομάσειε καὶ εἴποι ἀντ' ἐκείνου "Τάνταλον," […]). Socrates only describes what Tantalos suffered, not what he did. Intentionally or not, Socrates here follows a Homeric precedent. The classic account of Tantalos' torment in Hades, provided by Odysseus in Book 11 of the *Odyssey* (582-92), also omits to mention what Tantalos did to receive his extraordinary punishment. However, other sources provide us with evidence that one, apparently predominant, version of the story was that Tantalos transgressed against the gods when he decided to test their

[48] On the different versions of the story, including this one, cf. Hansen 2000.
[49] R. Fowler 2000: 429-430.

supposed omniscience by serving them up a dinner made from the flesh of his own son, Pelops.[50] We know this version, in part, from Pindar and Euripides who both reject it. In Pindar's *First Olympian Ode*, this version of the story is replaced with the story that Tantalos' crime was to steal the gods' nectar and ambrosia and give it to mortal men. Yet another version is referenced in Euripides' *Orestes*, where Electra explains that Tantalos pays his penalty "because, though enjoying, as a mortal, equal rank with the gods at their shared table, he had an unbridled tongue, a most disgraceful malady."[51]

According to Socrates' view of Tantalos in the *Gorgias* (523a-527a, esp. 525b-526d), by contrast, Tantalos is not punished for any particular misdeed or impious act towards the gods. Rather, Tantalos is punished for his wickedness: his misuse of power as king. In true Socratic spirit, Socrates identifies Tantalos' own wickedness - and not the gods - as the cause of his wretchedness (cf. *Resp.* 378e-380c, esp. 380a). In the same passage, Socrates provides his own understanding of the ancestral curse of the Tantalids by making the - very Socratic - point that it is almost impossible to become anything but very bad when one belongs to a very bad and very powerful family. This Socratic understanding of the Tantalids is probably what underlies the interpretation of the names in the present passage of the *Cratylus*. For example, Atreus' own destructiveness ruined his virtue, Pelops' own shortsightedness caused his impious behaviour, and Tantalos' desire for power corrupted him and caused his misery.

If this is correct, then Socrates does not just use what is generally thought to be known about the bearer of the name. He uses what he himself thinks he knows about the bearer of the name – the Socratic view of the bearer and what the bearer represents – which, in the case of the Tantalids, is in contrast with the traditional view.

Having shown that the names of Atreus, Pelops, and Tantalos are naturally correct, Socrates proceeds, without pause, to treat the names of their divine ancestors: Zeus, Kronos, and Ouranos (395e5-396c3). As in the previous cases, Socrates uses what he knows (or thinks he knows) about the bearer of the name to understand what the name signifies.

In the case of Zeus, Socrates claims that his name is naturally correct, even if it is not easy to understand why (395e5-396a2: φαίνεται δὲ καὶ τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ λεγομένῳ τῷ Διὶ παγκάλως τὸ ὄνομα κεῖσθαι· ἔστι δὲ οὐ ῥᾴδιον κατανοῆσαι.). The key, Socrates explains, is to see that the name of Zeus is like a sentence consisting of two parts – as can be seen in the two accusative forms, "Ζῆνα" and "Δία", – and that the two parts, when put together, indicate the nature of the god. As a reason for this interpretation, Socrates points out that Zeus, as the ruler and king of all, is the greatest cause of life for humans and everything else (396a7-9: οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἡμῖν καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσιν ὅστις ἐστὶν αἴτιος μᾶλλον τοῦ ζῆν ἢ ὁ ἄρχων τε καὶ βασιλεὺς τῶν πάντων). Finally,

[50] Cf. Sourvinou-Inwood 1986; Willink 1983

[51] 7-10: καὶ τίνει ταύτην δίκην, ὡς μὲν λέγουσιν, ὅτι θεοῖς ἄνθρωπος ὢν κοινῆς τραπέζης ἀξίωμ᾽ ἔχων ἴσον, ἀκόλαστον ἔσχε γλῶσσαν, αἰσχίστην νόσον. Transl. D. Kovacs.

Socrates concludes that this god is correctly named the one because of whom life is always there for all living beings, and that the original name has been divided into one part signifying "because" and another signifying "life" (396a9-b3: συμβαίνει οὖν ὀρθῶς ὀνομάζεσθαι οὗτος ὁ θεὸς εἶναι, δι' ὃν ζῆν ἀεὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ζῶσιν ὑπάρχει· διείληπται δὲ δίχα, ὥσπερ λέγω, ἓν ὂν τὸ ὄνομα, τῷ "Διὶ" καὶ τῷ "Ζηνί.").

In the case of Kronos, the reasoning becomes more elliptic and convoluted. Socrates begins by recognising that, just upon hearing it, one might think there is something outrageous about Zeus being the son of Kronos (396b3-4: τοῦτον δὲ Κρόνου ὑὸν εἶναι ὑβριστικὸν μὲν ἄν τις δόξειεν εἶναι ἀκούσαντι ἐξαίφνης). "But", Socrates continues, "it makes good sense that Zeus is the offspring of a great intellect" (396b4-5: εὔλογον δὲ μεγάλης τινὸς διανοίας ἔκγονον εἶναι τὸν Δία). The reason for this, Socrates explains, is that "the name signifies pure, not boy or insolence, but the purity of him and the unmixedness of the intellect" (396b5-7: κορὸν γὰρ σημαίνει, οὐ παῖδα <οὐδὲ πλησμονήν>, ἀλλὰ τὸ καθαρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκήρατον τοῦ νοῦ). For the first time in the dialogue, Socrates explicitly mentions and rejects an alternative interpretation instead of just developing his own interpretation. This alternative interpretation associates Κρόνος with κόρος and takes κόρος as the word meaning "boy" or "young man" or as the word meaning "satiety" or "insolence". Socrates' own interpretation associates Κρόνος with κορός and νοῦς and construes κορός as the word meaning "pure" (and not as the word meaning "dark" or "black"). What enables Socrates to choose between these two interpretations? And what motivates the two interpretations in the first place? Although Socrates' interpretation seems to account slightly better for the linguistic form of the name, the motivation for his choice between the two interpretations is clearly not a question of linguistic plausibility, but rather a concern with the correct view of Kronos. The starting-point for the alternative interpretation seems to be the traditional view of Kronos as the insolent young man who castrated and deposed his own father, Ouranos, and later swallowed his own children to avoid a similar fate. This interpretation would help explain Socrates' initial remark that, just upon hearing it, one might think there is something outrageous about Zeus being the son of Kronos. The reason why one might consider this outrageous is, I think, that Zeus - who has just been described as the king and ruler of all things and the greatest cause of life for all living things - is being associated with Kronos and thereby with the traditional stories recounting their horrible treatment of each other. This interpretation would, in turn, help explain Socrates' reason for rejecting the alternative interpretation. If the mere mention of the father-son relationship might by itself seem outrageous because of the instant association with the traditional stories, then the idea of interpreting the name "Kronos" on the basis of the same traditional view of Kronos must be complete anathema to Socrates. As we learn in Book 2 of the *Republic* (377e-378b), Socrates regards the traditional story about Ouranos, Kronos, and Zeus as the prototype of ugly falsehoods which should be banned from the city and from the education of the guardians because of their harmful effects. As Socrates puts it (378b1-5):

> Καὶ οὐ λεκτέοι γ' [sc. οἱ λόγοι], ἔφην, ὦ Ἀδείμαντε, ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ πόλει. οὐδὲ λεκτέον νέῳ ἀκούοντι ὡς ἀδικῶν τὰ ἔσχατα οὐδὲν ἂν θαυμαστὸν ποιοῖ, οὐδ' αὖ ἀδικοῦντα πατέρα κολάζων παντὶ τρόπῳ, ἀλλὰ δρῴη ἄν ὅπερ θεῶν οἱ πρῶτοί τε καὶ μέγιστοι.
>
> We will not have them [i.e. the stories] told in our city, Adeimantus. When the young are listening, they are not to be told that if they committed the most horrible crimes they wouldn't be doing anything out of the ordinary, not even if they inflicted every kind of punishment on a father who treated them badly. We won't tell them that they would merely be acting like the first and greatest of the gods. (transl. T. Griffith)

In other words, Socrates believes that the story is an expression of impiety, and that this story – and similar stories – make people impious.[52] Fortunately, Socrates has another interpretation which shows there is nothing insolent about Zeus being the son of Kronos. In fact, what that means is that Zeus is the offspring of a great intellect (396b4-5: εὔλογον δὲ μεγάλης τινὸς διανοίας ἔκγονον εἶναι τὸν Δία). What lies behind this claim? It is possible that Socrates has in mind some specific role of Kronos, either as the ruler of the universe at the time before Zeus, or as the father of Zeus in some cosmogonical succession. But it seems more likely that the background for the claim is the general idea that the divine is intellect.[53] One of the special things about the divine intellect, as compared to the human intellect, is its purity – the fact that it is free from, and untouched by, the envy, ill-will, and injustice of the human world. This view of the divine – and of Kronos as divine – is the exact opposite of the traditional view of Kronos. And this view is no doubt what allows Socrates to claim that the name "Kronos" signifies pure intellect rather than youthful insolence (396b5-7: κορὸν γὰρ σημαίνει, οὐ παῖδα <οὐδὲ πλησμονήν>, ἀλλὰ τὸ καθαρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκήρατον τοῦ νοῦ). Thus, what enables Socrates to choose between the two interpretations, and what motivates the two interpretations in the first place, is the fundamental opposition between the traditional and the Socratic view of Kronos.[54]

In the case of Ouranos, the reasoning remains elliptic and convoluted. As before, Socrates starts from the traditional story that Kronos is the son of Ouranos (396b7: ἔστι δὲ οὗτος Οὐρανοῦ ὑός, ὡς λόγος). "Further," Socrates continues, "the upward gaze has this fine name, "ourania", since it sees the things up there, and from this, Hermogenes, the pure intellect arises, so the astronomers say, and heaven (i.e. Ouranos) has been given a correct name" (396b8-c3: ἡ δὲ αὖ ἐς τὸ ἄνω ὄψις καλῶς ἔχει τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα

[52] Cf. *Resp.* 383c1-5: ὅταν τις τοιαῦτα λέγῃ περὶ θεῶν, χαλεπανοῦμέν τε καὶ χορὸν οὐ δώσομεν, οὐδὲ τοὺς διδασκάλους ἐάσομεν ἐπὶ παιδείᾳ χρῆσθαι τῶν νέων, εἰ μέλλουσιν ἡμῖν οἱ φύλακες θεοσεβεῖς τε καὶ θεῖοι γίγνεσθαι, καθ' ὅσον ἀνθρώπῳ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον οἷόν τε.

[53] For this notion in Plato, cf. Menn 1995

[54] For a different interpretation of this passage, cf. D. Robinson 1995.

καλεῖσθαι, "οὐρανία," ὁρῶσα τὰ ἄνω, ὅθεν δὴ καί φασιν, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, τὸν καθαρὸν νοῦν παραγίγνεσθαι οἱ μετεωρολόγοι, καὶ τῷ οὐρανῷ ὀρθῶς τὸ ὄνομα κεῖσθαι). For the first time in the dialogue, Socrates attributes (part of) his interpretation to someone else, in this case "the astronomers". Although the line of reasoning is not very clear, Socrates seems to suggest that the name-giver named heaven (Ouranos) after the upward gaze (ourania),[55], and that just as Ouranos is said to be the father of Kronos, so the upward gaze is the source of a pure mind. The view that the upward gaze is the source of a pure mind is clearly shared by Socrates, especially if we take the upward gaze as referring to the intellect being directed at the intelligibles such as true motion, velocity, and slowness (rather than the eyes being directed at the visible stars and planets and their movements).[56] Thus, once again we see Socrates interpreting the name by using what he knows (or thinks he knows) about the bearer of the name.

Having treated the names of the Tantalids and three of their divine ancestors, Socrates continues (396c3-397a4):

> ΣΩ. [...] εἰ δ' ἐμεμνήμην τὴν Ἡσιόδου γενεαλογίαν, τίνας ἔτι τοὺς ἀνωτέρω προγόνους λέγει τούτων, οὐκ ἂν ἐπαυόμην διεξιὼν ὡς ὀρθῶς αὐτοῖς τὰ ὀνόματα κεῖται, ἕως ἀπεπειράθην τῆς σοφίας ταυτησὶ τί ποιήσει, εἰ ἄρα ἀπερεῖ ἢ οὔ, ἢ ἐμοὶ ἐξαίφνης νῦν οὑτωσὶ προσπέπτωκεν ἄρτι οὐκ οἶδ' ὁπόθεν.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Καὶ μὲν δή, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀτεχνῶς γέ μοι δοκεῖς ὥσπερ οἱ ἐνθουσιῶντες ἐξαίφνης χρησμῳδεῖν.
>
> ΣΩ. Καὶ αἰτιῶμαί γε, ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, μάλιστα αὐτὴν ἀπὸ Εὐθύφρονος τοῦ Προσπαλτίου προσπεπτωκέναι μοι· ἔωθεν γὰρ πολλὰ αὐτῷ συνῆ καὶ παρεῖχον τὰ ὦτα. κινδυνεύει οὖν ἐνθουσιῶν οὐ μόνον τὰ ὦτά μου ἐμπλῆσαι τῆς δαιμονίας σοφίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπειλῆφθαι. δοκεῖ οὖν μοι χρῆναι οὑτωσὶ ἡμᾶς ποιῆσαι· τὸ μὲν τήμερον εἶναι χρήσασθαι αὐτῇ καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπισκέψασθαι, αὔριον δέ, ἂν καὶ ὑμῖν συνδοκῇ, ἀποδιοπομπησόμεθά τε αὐτὴν καὶ καθαρούμεθα ἐξευρόντες ὅστις τὰ τοιαῦτα δεινὸς καθαίρειν, εἴτε τῶν ἱερέων τις εἴτε τῶν σοφιστῶν.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Ἀλλ' ἐγὼ μὲν συγχωρῶ· πάνυ γὰρ ἂν ἡδέως τὰ ἐπίλοιπα περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀκούσαιμι.

> Soc. [...] If I could remember Hesiod's genealogy and the even earlier ancestors he mentions, I wouldn't stop going through how they have been given their names correctly, before I had tested this wisdom and found out

[55] In Book 6 of the *Republic* (509d1-4), Socrates connects heaven (οὐρανός) with the adjective ὁρατός (formed from the verb ὁράω): Νόησον τοίνυν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὥσπερ λέγομεν, δύο αὐτὼ εἶναι, καὶ βασιλεύειν τὸ μὲν νοητοῦ γένους τε καὶ τόπου, τὸ δ' αὖ ΟΡΑΤΟ, ἵνα μὴ ΟΡΑΝΟ εἰπὼν δόξω σοι σοφίζεσθαι περὶ τὸ ὄνομα. ἀλλ' οὖν ἔχεις ταῦτα διττὰ εἴδη, ὁρατόν, νοητόν;

[56] Cf. *Resp.* 528e-530c

what it will do, and whether it will give up. I'm talking about this wisdom which has come upon me just now, I don't know from where.

Her. Yes, Socrates, you really seem to deliver oracles all of a sudden, just like those who are inspired.

Soc. And the way I explain this, Hermogenes, is that Euthyphro of Prospalta no doubt made this wisdom come upon me. From early this morning, I spent a long time with him, and I lent him my ears. In his inspired state, it seems he not only filled my ears with his daimonic wisdom, but also took hold of my soul. Therefore, this is what I think we should do. Today we can use the wisdom to carry out the rest of our inquiry about names. But tomorrow, if we agree, we shall sent it away and purify ourselves after having found one who knows how to purify these things, whether some priest or sophist.

Her. Very well, I agree. I would really like to hear the rest about names.

This passage raises three questions. What is the significance of the reference to Euthyphro? What is the relation between the reference to Euthyphro and the preceding interpretations of the names of the Tantalids and their divine ancestors? And, finally, what is the relation between the reference to Euthyphro and the subsequent interpretations of names? One possible interpretation is to take Socrates' words *at face value*. On this interpretation, Socrates really is inspired and ascribes his state of wisdom to Euthyphro (396c3-d8), and Socrates sincerely suggests they make use of the wisdom today and purify themselves of it tomorrow (396d2-397a2). Further, Socrates really views the interpretations of the names of the Tantalids and their divine ancestors (or some of them) as attempts to use the wisdom of Euthyphro (396c3-d1), just as he genuinely proposes to use the wisdom to carry out the subsequent interpretations and inquiries (396d8-397a2). Another possible interpretation is to take Socrates' words to have *some degree of irony*. On this interpretation, Socrates uses the exaggerated language of inspiration and purification to indicate that he is drawing on Euthyphro's view of names (396c3-d8), and that he regards his own concern with names as unusual and strictly temporary (396d2-397a2). Further, although Socrates does not really view the interpretations of the names of the Tantalids and their divine ancestors (or some of them) as attempts to use the wisdom of Euthyphro, he does regard some or all of them as reminiscent of Euthyphro's interpretations of names (396c3-d1). Similarly, while Socrates does not genuinely propose to use the wisdom of Euthyphro to carry out the subsequent interpretations and inquiries, he does suggest that the rest of their inquiry will bear important similarities with Euthyphro's treatment of names (396d2-397a2). Finally, yet another possible interpretation is to take Socrates' words as *wholly ironic*. On this interpretation, Socrates only pretends to be drawing on Euthyphro's view of names (396c3-d8) and to regard his own concern with names as unusual and strictly temporary (396d2-397a2). Further, Socrates only pretends to regard the inter-

pretations of the names of the Tantalids and their divine ancestors (or some of them) as reminiscent of Euthyphro's interpretations of names (396c3-d1). Finally, Socrates only pretends to suggest that the rest of the inquiry will bear important similarities with Euthyphro's treatment of names (396d2-397a2).

As far as I am aware, no scholar has taken Socrates' words at face value. And with good reason, since Socrates' talk about inspiration clearly must be ironic. Not because Socrates denies that humans can be divinely inspired, or that divine inspiration can pass from one human to another. As Socrates explains in the *Ion* (533d-e), inspiration works like the force of a magnet. Just as the magnet can transmit its magnetic force to pieces of iron, so the muse can transmit its inspirational force to human beings. According to Socrates, this analogy explains why good poets produce good poetry, not from expertise, but from being inspired and possessed (534e). Elaborating on this point, Socrates makes it clear that the state of inspiration, conceived as a state of being possessed, involves the temporary loss of rational control (534e-535a).[57] This last-mentioned aspect of the Socratic conception of inspiration makes it clear that Socrates' talk about inspiration in the present passage of the Cratylus must be ironic. First, Socrates clearly was not inspired or possessed in the first part of the dialogue, but rather exercised a high level of rational control. Therefore, even if Socrates was inspired by Euthyphro earlier this morning, the effect must have worn off by the time Socrates began the conversation with Hermogenes. Second, when Socrates suggests that they make use of the inspiration today and purify themselves of it tomorrow, he displays a level of rational control which is incompatible with being inspired or possessed. Thus, even if we allow for the possibility that the state of inspiration ceases and then returns when Socrates starts talking about the subjects he and Euthyphro discussed earlier this morning, Socrates' own proposal to make use of the state of inspiration clearly shows that he is not inspired or possessed. That is, Socrates is being ironic.

Most scholars have taken Socrates' words to have some degree of irony. On this reading, Socrates pretends to be inspired in order to indicate that he is drawing on Euthyphro's view of names, and that he regards his own concern with names as unusual and strictly temporary. What would be the point of doing this? Many scholars interpret Socrates' use of irony in this passage as a self-distancing device. That is, Socrates pretends to be drawing on Euthyphro's wisdom, but is really distancing himself from Euthyphro's view of names and, by implication, from the preceding interpretations of the names of the Tantalids and their divine ancestors (as well as the subsequent interpretations of names). According to these scholars, this act of self-distancing is part of Socrates' overall strategy to undermine the view that the interpretation of names can

[57] According to Penelope Murray (among others), the idea that the state of inspiration involves the temporary loss of rational control is a Socratic/Platonic invention; cf. P. Murray 1996: 6-12. Compare also Timaeus' sharp distinction between the inspired state of the diviner and the sober state of the interpreter in his account of the function of the liver in divination (*Ti.*, 71a-72b).

provide knowledge about things,[58] or, less polemically, to show that the interpretation of names – as compared to dialectic – is a much inferior source of knowledge about things.[59] Or, non-polemically, to indicate that, despite having the serious purpose of giving systematic and accurate access to the namegivers' opinions, the interpretation of names is primarily a matter of playful and imaginative guesswork.[60]

David Sedley argues against the view that the target of Socrates' irony is his own interpretations of names. According to Sedley, Socrates' ironic reference to Euthyphro might be nothing more than a playful attempt to avoid taking credit for his own brillant performance as an interpreter of names. Indeed, Socrates might even be expressing genuine regard for Euthyphro as an interpreter of names. But even if that is not the case, the use of irony could very well be an instance of the kind of ironic self-deflation which is typical of Socrates. That is, Socrates could be "pretending that his superior etymological skill is inspired by, and therefore derivative from, what is in reality the inferior skill of Euthyphro".[61]

In my view, we should take Socrates' words to be wholly ironic. On this reading, Socrates not only pretends that he is inspired, but also pretends that he is drawing on Euthyphro's view of names. For this reason, I agree with David Sedley that Socrates engages in ironic self-deflation (although, as we shall see, I prefer to describe his behaviour as a case of false deference). I also agree that the target of Socrates' irony is not his own interpretations of names. The really important point, however, is that the main target of the irony is Euthyphro. Socrates introduces Euthyphro, not as a prop for his own ironic self-deflation, but as the polar opposite to his own approach to the interpretation of names. The main purpose of making this contrast, as we shall see, is to bring out more forcefully the distinctively Socratic aspects of his own interpretation of names.

In the first part of the passage (396c3-d3), this purpose is not yet apparent. Socrates compares himself to a seer who is suddenly befallen by some higher wisdom (396c7-d1: τῆς σοφίας ταυτησὶ [...], ἣ ἐμοὶ ἐξαίφνης νῦν οὑτωσὶ προσπέπτωκεν ἄρτι οὐκ οἶδ' ὁπόθεν). At this point in the passage, Socrates seems to be making fun of the immediately preceding interpretations of the names of Kronos and Ouranos. Not because they are wrong, but because they are elliptic and convoluted. Similarly, in the *Symposium*, Socrates compares Diotima's words to an oracular response in need of divination.[62] As we saw in the first chapter, Hermogenes is familiar with this Socratic topos. He even used the same kind of irony in his initial description of Cratylus in what seemed to be a conscious attempt to present himself as a Socratic (cf. 384a4-5: εἰ οὖν πῃ ἔχεις συμβαλεῖν τὴν Κρατύλου μαντείαν, ἡδέως ἂν ἀκούσαιμι). Therefore,

[58] Baxter 1992: 107-113 (on Euthyphro); 86-106 (on Socrates' overall strategy).
[59] Dalimier 1998: 16-17, 26-27, 38-39; Barney 2001: 49-80.
[60] Ademollo 2011: 237-256.
[61] Sedley 2003: 40-41; cf. 77-78.
[62] 206b9-10: Μαντείας, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, δεῖται ὅτι ποτε λέγεις, καὶ οὐ μανθάνω.

Hermogenes' reply, comparing Socrates to those who suddenly deliver oracles under divine inspiration (396d2-3: Καὶ μὲν δή, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀτεχνῶς γέ μοι δοκεῖς ὥσπερ οἱ ἐνθουσιῶντες ἐξαίφνης χρησμῳδεῖν), should not be taken as his genuine confirmation that Socrates seems inspired, but rather as his attempt to play along with Socrates' ironic self-description.

In the second part of the passage (396d4-397a4), Socrates refers to Euthyphro as the source of the wisdom that has befallen him. If Euthyphro was only known to us from this passage, the reference could perhaps be taken as a generic reference to some self-declared oracle. As such, the reference could perhaps be understood as a simple continuation of Socrates' ironic self-description. But, of course, Euthyphro is much more than a name to us, thanks to Plato's own dialogue, the *Euthyphro*. In that dialogue, Socrates meets Euthyphro in front of the king's court, as they both have legal business. Socrates explains to Euthyphro that he has been charged with corrupting the youth and with impiety (2a-3b). In response, Euthyphro describes Socrates and himself as the kind of people who benefit the city but receive nothing in return but ridicule and envy from "the many" (3a6-c5). According to himself, Euthyphro offers predictions about divine matters in the public assembly – predictions which never fail to be accurate – and yet the assembly only mock him as if he were mad (3b9-c5). Euthyphro's self-proclaimed knowledge about divine matters is not limited to predictions about the future, but also covers subjects such as piety and impiety. Indeed, Euthyphro is so confident of his own knowledge about piety and impiety that he has decided to prosecute his own father for murder on the grounds that not prosecuting a murderer – whether a family member or a stranger – is impious and leads to pollution, regardless of the specific circumstances (3e-4d). The father and the rest of the family have objected that it is impious for a son to prosecute his own father for murder, but Euthyphro dismisses this as an ill-informed opinion about the divine view of piety and impiety (4d-e). Socrates is intrigued by this claim to knowledge and asks Euthyphro to explain what he takes the pious and the impious to be (4e-5d). Euthyphro's answer leads to a revealing exhange of theological views (5d8-6c7):

> ΕΥΘ. Λέγω τοίνυν ὅτι τὸ μὲν ὅσιόν ἐστιν ὅπερ ἐγὼ νῦν ποιῶ, τῷ ἀδικοῦντι ἢ περὶ φόνους ἢ περὶ ἱερῶν κλοπὰς ἤ τι ἄλλο τῶν τοιούτων ἐξαμαρτάνοντι ἐπεξιέναι, ἐάντε πατὴρ ὢν τυγχάνῃ ἐάντε μήτηρ ἐάντε ἄλλος ὁστισοῦν, τὸ δὲ μὴ ἐπεξιέναι ἀνόσιον· ἐπεί, ὦ Σώκρατες, θέασαι ὡς μέγα σοι ἐρῶ τεκμήριον τοῦ νόμου ὅτι οὕτως ἔχει—ὃ καὶ ἄλλοις ἤδη εἶπον, ὅτι ταῦτα ὀρθῶς ἂν εἴη οὕτω γιγνόμενα—μὴ ἐπιτρέπειν τῷ ἀσεβοῦντι μηδ' ἂν ὁστισοῦν τυγχάνῃ ὤν. αὐτοὶ γὰρ οἱ ἄνθρωποι τυγχάνουσι νομίζοντες τὸν Δία τῶν θεῶν ἄριστον καὶ δικαιότατον, καὶ τοῦτον ὁμολογοῦσι τὸν αὑτοῦ πατέρα δῆσαι ὅτι τοὺς ὑεῖς κατέπινεν οὐκ ἐν δίκῃ, κἀκεῖνόν γε αὖ τὸν αὐτοῦ πατέρα ἐκτεμεῖν δι' ἕτερα τοιαῦτα· ἐμοὶ δὲ χαλεπαίνουσιν ὅτι τῷ πατρὶ ἐπεξέρχομαι ἀδικοῦντι, καὶ οὕτως αὐτοὶ αὑτοῖς τὰ ἐναντία λέγουσι περί τε τῶν θεῶν καὶ περὶ ἐμοῦ.

ΣΩ. Ἆρά γε, ὦ Εὐθύφρων, τοῦτ᾽ ἔστιν οὗ ἕνεκα τὴν γραφὴν φεύγω, ὅτι τὰ τοιαῦτα ἐπειδάν τις περὶ τῶν θεῶν λέγῃ, δυσχερῶς πως ἀποδέχομαι; διὸ δή, ὡς ἔοικε, φήσει τίς με ἐξαμαρτάνειν. νῦν οὖν εἰ καὶ σοὶ ταῦτα συνδοκεῖ τῷ εὖ εἰδότι περὶ τῶν τοιούτων, ἀνάγκη δή, ὡς ἔοικε, καὶ ἡμῖν συγχωρεῖν. τί γὰρ καὶ φήσομεν, οἵ γε καὶ αὐτοὶ ὁμολογοῦμεν περὶ αὐτῶν μηδὲν εἰδέναι; ἀλλά μοι εἰπὲ πρὸς Φιλίου, σὺ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡγῇ ταῦτα οὕτως γεγονέναι;

ΕΥΘ. Καὶ ἔτι γε τούτων θαυμασιώτερα, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἃ οἱ πολλοὶ οὐκ ἴσασιν.

ΣΩ. Καὶ πόλεμον ἄρα ἡγῇ σὺ εἶναι τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς θεοῖς πρὸς ἀλλήλους, καὶ ἔχθρας γε δεινὰς καὶ μάχας καὶ ἄλλα τοιαῦτα πολλά, οἷα λέγεταί τε ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν, καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγαθῶν γραφέων τά τε ἄλλα ἱερὰ ἡμῖν καταπεποίκιλται, καὶ δὴ καὶ τοῖς μεγάλοις Παναθηναίοις ὁ πέπλος μεστὸς τῶν τοιούτων ποικιλμάτων ἀνάγεται εἰς τὴν ἀκρόπολιν; ταῦτα ἀληθῆ φῶμεν εἶναι, ὦ Εὐθύφρων;

ΕΥΘ. Μὴ μόνον γε, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀλλ᾽ ὅπερ ἄρτι εἶπον, καὶ ἄλλα σοι ἐγὼ πολλά, ἐάνπερ βούλῃ, περὶ τῶν θείων διηγήσομαι, ἃ σὺ ἀκούων εὖ οἶδ᾽ ὅτι ἐκπλαγήσῃ.

Euth. I say that the pious is to do what I am doing now, to prosecute the wrongdoer, be it about murder or temple robbery or anything else like that, whether the wrongdoer is your father or your mother or anyone else; not to prosecute is impious. And observe, Socrates, that I can cite powerful evidence that the law is so. I have already said to others that such actions are right, not to favour the ungodly, whoever they are. These people themselves believe that Zeus is the best and most just of the gods, yet they agree that he bound his father because he unjustly swallowed his sons, and that he in turn castrated his father for similar reasons. But they are angry with me because I am prosecuting my father for wrongdoing. They contradict themselves in what they say about the gods and about me.

Soc. Indeed, Euthyphro, this is the reason why I am a defendant in the case, because I somehow find it vexing to hear things like that being said about the gods, and it is likely to be the reason why I shall be told I do wrong. Now, however, if you, who have full know knowledge of such things, share their opinions, then we must agree with them, too, it would seem. For what are we to say, we who agree that we ourselves have no knowledge of them? Tell me, by the god of friendship, do you really believe these things have happened?

Euth. Yes, Socrates, and so have even more marvellous things, of which the many have no knowledge.

Soc. And do you believe that there really is war among the gods, and terrible enmities and battles, and other such things as are told by the po-

> ets, and other sacred stories which are elaborated by the good painters, and then of course the robe at the Panathenaea which is full of such elaborations when it is carried up to the Acropolis? Are we to say these things are true, Euthyphro?
>
> Euth. Not only these, Socrates, but, as I was saying just now, I will, if you wish, relate many other things about the gods which I know will amaze you. (transl. G.M.A. Grube; revised)

As "powerful evidence" for his view about piety and impiety Euthyphro cites the traditional stories about Zeus, Kronos, and Ouranos (5d8-6a6). In response, Socrates wonders whether he is being charged with impiety exactly because he finds it vexing to hear such stories about the gods. Socrates seems to imply that he normally objects and confronts people when they express such a view of the gods, and that this is what has caused him to be charged with impiety. In this case, however, since Euthyphro is an expert on the gods, Socrates considers accepting the stories on his authority, but then asks Euthyphro to confirm that he really does believe the stories to be true (6a7-b4). Euthyphro confirms this and adds that he believes even more marvellous stories which are not known to the many (6b5-6). Socrates does not inquire about these stories but instead asks Euthyphro whether he also believes the popular stories about battles and enmities among the gods (6b7-c4). Once again, Euthyphro confirms this and adds that he can tell many other stories about the divine which will "amaze" – or "shock" – Socrates (6c5-7). Euthyphro is eager to tell Socrates about the more marvellous stories which are unknown to the many, but since Socrates is just as eager to avoid this, we do not learn more about the content of these stories, except perhaps that Euthyphro regards them as similar to, yet more extreme than, the traditional stories.[63] Among the things we do learn from this passage and from the Euthyphro in general is that Socrates' treatment of Euthyphro as an expert on divine matters is a clear case of false deference. We also learn that Euthyphro firmly believes the traditional stories about Zeus, Kronos, and Ouranos – to the point of using them as primary evidence for his own view about piety and impiety. And, finally, we are reminded that Socrates – equally firmly – condemns these same traditional stories.

This background information illuminates the present passage in the *Cratylus* in several ways. First, Socrates' reference to Euthyphro is not a generic reference to some self-declared oracle, but a specific reference to a familiar individual with particular views and character traits. Second, Socrates' reference to Euthyphro is not a sincere reference to a genuine authority, but an ironic reference to a fake self-declared authority, i.e. a case of false deference. Third, Socrates' reference to Euthyphro is not a simple continuation of some ironic self-description, but an attack on Euthyphro and his self-proclaimed wisdom. That is, Socrates introduces Euthyphro, not as a prop for his own

[63] This would be in line with David Furley's defence of "the pre-Burnet position of seeing in Euthyphro a stickler for adherence to received tradition" (Furley 1985: 208).

ironic self-deflation, but as the polar opposite to his own approach to the interpretation of names. Socrates makes this contrast in order to bring out more forcefully the distinctively Socratic aspects of his own interpretation of names. We can distinguish between two aspects: method and substance. First, Socrates' description of Euthyphro's use of inspiration as the method of interpretation brings out more clearly the use of *reason* in Socrates' interpretation of names. Let me highlight the three most important features of Socrates' *rational* method of interpretation.

As we saw in the first chapter, name-giving is the task of the expert name-maker. This means that the correctness of names can be assessed and explained with reference to the expertise of name-making. In other words, the causes of the correctness of names can be identified and made explicit in the form of reasons which are, or are derived from, the principles of the expertise of name-making. Socrates illustrated this procedure with the names of Hector and Astyanax, which he explained as correct by reference to the principle that things that come into being in accordance with nature should be given the same names (394d2-3: Τοῖς μὲν δὴ κατὰ φύσιν γιγνομένοις τὰ αὐτὰ ἀποδοτέον ὀνόματα). Socrates then proceeded to the related principle that things that come into being against nature should be given the name of the kind to which they themselves belong (394d5-10) and explained the principle by assessing the correctness of the names of Orestes and Agamemnon.

The conception of name-giving as the task of the expert name-maker is the most fundamental feature of Socrates' rational method of interpretation. Describing this conception as a fundamental feature does not mean that there would be no basis for Socrates' use of reason in his interpretation of names if it turned out to be wrong to think of name-giving as the task of the expert name-maker. What it does mean is that Socrates' rational method of interpretation is an integral part of his assessment of the correctness of names which in turn is based on the conception of name-giving as the task of the expert name-maker. It is an integral part because the assessment of the correctness of names presupposes an understanding of the signification of names. Further, since the signification of names often is not obvious (recall the analogy with the power of medical drugs), interpretation is needed. At this point in the dialogue, Socrates has indicated two important ways of meeting this need for interpretation.

In his treatment of the two names of Astyanax (i.e. "Skamandrios" and "Astyanax"), Socrates showed Hermogenes how to interpret a poem by attributing (supposed) insights to the poet (in this case Homer) on the basis of the poet's (supposed) wisdom. In that particular case, the target of interpretation was Homer's stance on the relative correctness of the two names. Socrates' implied suggestion was that as a wise man Homer must have believed that the Trojan men, considered as a group, are wiser than the Trojan women, and therefore he must have believed that the name used by the Trojan men (i.e. "Astyanax") is more correct than the name used by the Trojan women (i.e. "Skamandrios").[64]

[64] For Socrates' use of this method of interpretation later in the dialogue, cf. e.g. his interpretation of

In his treatment of the names of Orestes and Agamemnon, Socrates showed Hermogenes how to interpret the signification of a name by using what we know (or think we know) about the bearer of the name. In the case of Orestes, Socrates interpreted the name "Orestes" as signifying someone wild and brutal (rather than someone mild and virtuous) by using his (presumed) knowledge of Orestes' matricide. Similarly, in the case of Agamemnon, Socrates interpreted the name "Agamemnon" as signifying someone admirable and virtuous (rather than someone excessive and morally bad) on the basis of his (presumed) knowledge that Agamemnon was an admirable and steadfast commander. An important difference between these two methods of interpretation is that while the first method ascribes (supposed) insights to the name-maker (as well as the intention to use those insights in making the name), the second method makes no reference to the name-maker. For example, as Socrates himself puts it, the correctness of the name "Orestes" does not depend on whether Orestes was given the name by some chance (τις τύχη) or by a poet (or name-maker) (ποιητής τις) intending to show this nature in the name.[65] Further, since the correctness of the name "Orestes" depends on its signification, we can infer that Socrates equally holds that the signification of "Orestes" does not depend on whether the name is given by some chance or by some poet (or name-maker) intending to show this nature in the name. In other words, a name may signify something which was never intended by the original name-maker but is the result of chance. This may sound problematic, and it is true that it goes against the standard view in modern scholarship that the interpretation of names practiced by Socrates is simply a matter of decoding the descriptions encoded in the names by the original name-makers.[66] But it is important to note that Socrates does not thereby allow the interpreter to interpret names however he wishes, without any regard for the possible intentions of the original name-maker or for what is presumed to be known about the bearer of the name. The crucial thing, as Socrates indicates in his treatment of the name of Tantalos, is that it is *as if* some original name-maker intended the name to have this signification, even if it seems to be the result of chance (395e1-5: καὶ ἀτεχνῶς ἔοικεν, ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις βουλόμενος ταλάντατον ὀνομάσαι ἀποκρυπτόμενος ὀνομάσειε καὶ εἴποι ἀντ' ἐκείνου "Τάνταλον," τοιοῦτόν τι καὶ τούτῳ τὸ ὄνομα ἔοικεν ἐκπορίσαι ἡ τύχη τῆς φήμης).[67]

These are the three most important features of Socrates' rational method of interpretation. Socrates contrasts this method with Euthyphro's alternative method: inspiration. How are we to understand this contrast between rational and inspirational interpretation of names? Does Socrates regard both methods as valid, or does he only

the name "daimones" (397e-398c).

[65] 394e8-11: Ὥσπερ γε καὶ ὁ "Ορέστης," ὦ Ἑρμόγενες, κινδυνεύει ὀρθῶς ἔχειν, εἴτε τις τύχη ἔθετο αὐτῷ τὸ ὄνομα εἴτε καὶ ποιητής τις, τὸ θηριῶδες τῆς φύσεως καὶ τὸ ἄγριον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὀρεινὸν ἐνδεικνύμενος τῷ ὀνόματι.

[66] Sedley 2003: 25-50.

[67] For Socrates' use of this method of interpretation later in the dialogue, cf. e.g. his interpretation of the name "soul" (399d-400b).

regard the rational method as valid? In the *Ion*, Socrates seems to regard inspiration as a valid method of interpreting poetry (535a-536d). But does he also regard inspiration as a valid method of interpreting names? I do not think so. The reason is that while the interpreter of poetry can be touched by the original inspiration of the poet (like a piece of iron can be magnetized by another magnetized piece of iron), the interpreter of names cannot be affected in this way simply because the name-maker – as opposed to the (good) poet – does not make names from inspiration, but from expertise (in the case of the good name-maker) or from experience and practice (in the case of the bad name-maker). Thus, there is no original inspiration that can touch the interpreter of names. If this is Socrates' view, then he is likely to believe that Euthyphro is not really inspired when he is interpreting names (since that is impossible). This is not to say that Socrates believes that Euthyphro merely pretends to be inspired when he is interpreting names. Rather, Socrates probably believes that Euthyphro genuinely (but falsely) believes that he is inspired when interpreting names. The *Euthyphro* is, I believe, a parallel case. Socrates is likely to believe that Euthyphro genuinely (but falsely) believes that he is inspired when he is trying to divine the future. In this case, this is not because Socrates considers it impossible to be inspired when divining the future. On the contrary, Socrates believes that the best kind of divination is done while inspired.[68] Rather, it is because Socrates is likely to believe that anyone who is genuinely inspired could never be so wrong about the gods as Euthyphro is.

This brings us to the second aspect of the contrast between the Socratic and the Euthyphronic interpretation of names: substance. The point of making this distinction between method and substance is to make clear that even if Socrates and Euthyphro both preferred some rational method of interpretation, their interpretations of names would still be diametrically opposed simply because of the fundamental differences in their *substantive* world-views. The reason is that the two rational methods of interpretation we have described both crucially depend on the specific world-view of the interpreter. In the present context, we see this most clearly in the interpretation of the name of Kronos. As we saw earlier, Socrates not only developed his own interpretation of the name "Kronos" as signifying pure intellect, but also explicitly mentioned and rejected an alternative interpretation according to which "Kronos" signifies boy or insolence. While Socrates' interpretation seems to build on the (Socratic) conception of the divine as pure and as intellect, the alternative interpretation seems to build on the traditional view of Kronos as the *insolent boy* who castrated and deposed his own father, Ouranos, and later swallowed his own children to avoid a similar fate. As we have now seen, this traditional view is both an important part of the basis of Euthyphro's notion of piety (in the *Euthyphro*) and an important part of the target of Socrates' attack on the traditional notion of piety (in the *Republic*). Thus, the alternative interpretation may be described as Euthyphronic – if not in the sense that the historical Euthyphro actually proposed this interpretation, then at least in the sense

[68] Cf. *Phdr.* 244a-d. For a similar view (stated by Timaeus), cf. also *Tim.* 71e-72b.

that Euthyphro (as we know him from Plato) would be likely to propose such an interpretation, given what we know from the *Euthyphro* about his view of the gods and of Kronos in particular.

Accentuating this difference between the Socratic and the traditional (or Euthyphronic) conception of the divine and the importance of this difference for the interpretation of names is, I believe, the purpose of treating the names of both humans and gods in this passage. In the case of Tantalos and his descendants, Socrates already seemed to draw on a distinctively Socratic understanding of the individuals and of the family curse (as consisting in extreme vice passing from generation to generation causing extreme wretchedness). This Socratic understanding, albeit distinctive (especially in its omissions), could still be seen as a variation on the traditional stories. However, in the case of Ouranos and his divine descendants, Socrates evidently draws on a Socratic conception of the divine which is not just distinctively different from, but in direct opposition to, the traditional view of the gods as committing and suffering the same extreme acts of violence and vengeance as the Tantalid family. Thus, the contrast between humans and gods in this passage is not about the relatively inferior correctness of the names of humans as compared to the names of gods.[69] In fact, nothing in this passage indicates that the names of the Tantalids are less correct than the names of Ouranos and his divine descendants. The contrast between humans and gods in this passage is about the (relative) continuities and (absolute) discontinuities between the Socratic and the traditional (or Euthyphronic) interpretation of the names of humans and gods – as a consequence of the untraditional Socratic view that the gods are paradigms of absolute moral superiority while only humans are capable of vice and wretchedness.

In conclusion, Socrates' reference to Euthyphro is wholly ironic and a case of false deference. Socrates only pretends to be drawing on Euthyphro's view of names and to regard the interpretations of the names of the Tantalids and their divine ancestors (or some of them) as reminiscent of Euthyphro's interpretations of names. In reality, Socrates introduces Euthyphro as the polar opposite to his own approach to the interpretation of names. The point of making this contrast is to bring out more forcefully the distinctive methodological and substantive aspects of the Socratic interpretation of names. In terms of method, Socrates contrasts Euthyphro's use of inspiration with his own use of reason. In terms of substance, Socrates contrasts Euthyphro's traditionalist view of the gods with his own revisionist view of the gods.

This answers the first two of our three initial questions - the question about the significance of the reference to Euthyphro and the question about the relation between the reference to Euthyphro and the preceding interpretations of the names of the Tantalids and their divine ancestors. But what about the third question about the relation between the reference to Euthyphro and the subsequent interpretations of names? Towards the end of the passage, Socrates suggests that they make use of Euthyphro's

[69] As argued by, e.g., Sedley 2003: 86-89.

wisdom today and purify themselves of it tomorrow (396d2-397a2). Some scholars take this as Socrates' ironical way of suggesting that the subsequent interpretations will bear important similarities with Euthyphro's treatment of names.[70] Further, some scholars take Socrates' suggestion (and especially the mention of purification) as his way of distancing himself from, and warning against, the subsequent interpretations.[71] In line with my interpretation of Socrates' words in this passage as wholly ironic, I hold that Socrates only pretends to suggest that the subsequent interpretations will bear important similarities with Euthyphro's treatment of names. Further, since I regard Socrates' irony in this passage as directed against Euthyphro, I hold that Socrates really distances himself from Euthyphro's "wisdom" and suggests that they go on using his own interpretation of names. What about the mention of purification? Some scholars take this as Socrates' way of warning Hermogenes that the subsequent interpretations will have some kind of pernicious effect on their souls which they will have to work to remove subsequently, either in the following discussion with Cratylus,[72] or literally "tomorrow" (cf. 396e: τὸ μὲν τήμερον…αὔριον δέ).[73] As we saw earlier, I take Socrates' proposal to make use of his inspired state today and seek purification tomorrow as his way of underlining the irony of the whole passage, conjuring up the incongruous idea of someone genuinely inspired making such calculated use of the gift of the gods. For this reason, I take the specific mention of purification as part of the ironic description of the instrumental approach to inspiration (which might well be directed against Euthyphro).[74]

Having treated the names of the Tantalids and their divine ancestors and having contrasted his own interpretations of names with Euthyphro's "wisdom", Socrates proceeds to remark on the discovery of "some sort of model" in this important transitional passage (397a5-c3):

> ΣΩ. Ἀλλὰ χρὴ οὕτω ποιεῖν. πόθεν οὖν βούλει ἀρξώμεθα διασκοποῦντες, ἐπειδήπερ εἰς τύπον τινὰ ἐμβεβήκαμεν, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν εἰ ἄρα ἡμῖν ἐπιμαρτυρήσει αὐτὰ τὰ ὀνόματα μὴ πάνυ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου οὕτως ἕκαστα κεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' ἔχειν τινὰ ὀρθότητα; τὰ μὲν οὖν τῶν ἡρώων καὶ ἀνθρώπων

[70] Boyancé 1941; according to Barwick 1957: 73-74, Euthyphro's influence is limited to the first main section (i.e. 391b-410e); Baxter 1992: 108-113 does not see Euthyphro's influence in the *content* of the interpretations of names, but rather in "the hybristic desire for divine knowledge through inspiration" (p. 113) which fuels the subsequent interpretations.

[71] Baxter 1992: 108-113; Barney 2001: 57-60; Ademollo 2011: 243-246.

[72] Reeve 1998: xxxv.

[73] Ademollo 2011: 245-246.

[74] Euthyphro's disapproving description of how the public assembly mocks him as if he were mad (*Euthphr.* 2c2: καταγελῶσιν ὡς μαινομέμου) suggests that Euthyphro himself does not regard inspiration as involving madness. Thus, Euthyphro (as represented by Plato) really does seem to have (what we might call) an instrumental approach to inspiration. And if Penelope Murray is right that Socrates is the first to claim that inspiration involves madness, then Euthyphro's approach might represent the traditional view of inspiration (just as his view of the gods is taken to represent the traditional view of the gods).

> λεγόμενα ὀνόματα ἴσως ἂν ἡμᾶς ἐξαπατήσειεν· πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν κεῖται κατὰ προγόνων ἐπωνυμίας, οὐδὲν προσῆκον ἐνίοις, ὥσπερ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἐλέγομεν, πολλὰ δὲ ὥσπερ εὐχόμενοι τίθενται, οἷον "Εὐτυχίδην" καὶ "Σωσίαν" καὶ "Θεόφιλον" καὶ ἄλλα πολλά. τὰ μὲν οὖν τοιαῦτα δοκεῖ μοι χρῆναι ἐᾶν· εἰκὸς δὲ μάλιστα ἡμᾶς εὑρεῖν τὰ ὀρθῶς κείμενα περὶ τὰ ἀεὶ ὄντα καὶ πεφυκότα. ἐσπουδάσθαι γὰρ ἐνταῦθα μάλιστα πρέπει τὴν θέσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων· ἴσως δ' ἔνια αὐτῶν καὶ ὑπὸ θειοτέρας δυνάμεως ἢ τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐτέθη.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Δοκεῖς μοι καλῶς λέγειν, ὦ Σώκρατες.

> Soc. So that's what we should do. Now, since we have come upon some sort of model, where would you like us to begin our inquiry so that we may know whether the names themselves will bear evidence that each of them really haven't been given in a necessarily irrational way,[75] but have some sort of correctness? On the one hand, the names that are said to belong to heroes and humans might perhaps deceive us. For many of those names have been given in accordance with the names of ancestors, although it is not appropriate for some people, as we said in the beginning; and many of them are given almost as a kind of prayer, for example "Eutychides", "Sosias", "Theophilos", and many others. So, on the one hand, this kind of names we should leave alone, I think. On the other hand, we are most likely to find the names that have been correctly given in the area of eternal and natural things. For it's most fitting to take the giving of names in this area seriously, and perhaps some of the names were even given by some power more divine than the power of humans.
>
> Her. I think you are right, Socrates.

This is a key passage in the dialogue which previous scholarship has not given the detailed interpretation it deserves and requires. As David Sedley reads the passage, Socrates' main point is that the names of eternal and natural things are more likely to be correct than the names of humans and heroes because eternal and natural things have a more stable nature than humans and heroes.[76] Francesco Ademollo touches on different aspects of the passage but only emphasizes the point that Socrates, in describing the names of heroes and humans, makes a new distinction between being a name of something (or someone) and being a correct name of something (or someone) and thereby gives the first major blow to the account of natural correctness.[77] I believe that Sedley and Ademollo's interpretations are both incorrect. According to Socrates, the names of eternal and natural things are more likely to be correct than the names of humans and heroes, not because eternal and natural things have a more stable nature than

[75] This translation of ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου is explained below.
[76] Sedley 2003: 87-89.
[77] Ademollo 2011: 197-199.

humans and heroes, but because "it is most fitting to take the giving of names in this area seriously" (ἐσπουδάσθαι γὰρ ἐνταῦθα μάλιστα πρέπει τὴν θέσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων). Further, Socrates does not make a new distinction between being a name of something (or someone) and being a correct name of something, simply because Socrates has been operating with this distinction since the beginning of the dialogue. But more importantly, I believe that Sedley, Ademollo and other previous scholars have not recognized the central importance of this passage or its level of theoretical sophistication. In what follows, I shall try to bring out these aspects.

The passage proceeds in three stages. First, Socrates states that they have come upon some sort of model and asks Hermogenes where he would like to begin the subsequent inquiry into "the names themselves" (397a5-9). Then, Socrates proposes that they leave the names of heroes and humans because those names might deceive them (397a9-b6). Finally, Socrates suggests that they instead concentrate on the names of "eternal and natural things" because those names are more likely to be correct (397b6-c2). I shall treat each stage in turn.

Socrates states that they have come upon some sort of model and implies that this model will enable a subsequent inquiry into the names themselves. What is this model? What is the inquiry? And what is the connection between the model and the inquiry? In order to answer these questions, we must keep in mind Hermogenes' request at the beginning of the second part of the dialogue. Back then, Hermogenes asked Socrates to provide a more *specific* account of the natural correctness of names (390e-391a), and Socrates responded by proposing that they make a shared inquiry into this question (391a-b). As we noted earlier, Hermogenes' request has a parallel in Glaucon and Adeimantus' request for a more specific account of justice in Book 2 of the *Republic* (358b1-7; 367b3-6; 367e1-4). But there is more to this parallelism. In Book 2 of the *Republic*, Socrates proposes that they conduct their inquiry into the nature of justice by first studying justice in a good city and then considering whether justice is the same in a good human soul (368c-369a). Then, in Books 2 to 4, Socrates and the two brothers construct a hypothetical good city (369b-427c). From the very beginning, the interlocutors lay down the fundamental principle that each citizen should only follow the one occupation for which he is naturally equipped and leave other occupations to other citizens (370a-c). For example, the farmer should only do farming and leave the making of his farming implements to the blacksmith (370c-d), and the same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for the shoemaker and the soldier (374a-e). Having constructed the hypothetical good city, Socrates and the brothers begin their search for justice (427c-444a). First, they identify three of the four major virtues in the city: wisdom, courage, and self-discipline (427e-432a). Then, after a brief interlude, Socrates, apparently a little surprised himself, expresses the suspicion that the very principle which they have been using since they began constructing the good city – i.e. the principle that each citizen should only follow the one occupation for which he is naturally equipped and leave other occupations to other citizens – is justice or a kind of justice (433a). Socrates first satisfies himself and the two brothers that this principle is indeed likely to be justice in

the city (433a-435d), and then sets about considering whether a corresponding version of the principle can be found in the good human soul and can be agreed to be justice (435d-443b). Finally, towards the end of Book 4, Socrates has convinced himself and the brothers that, correspondingly, justice in the human soul consists in each of the elements in the soul performing its own function and leaving the other functions to the other elements (443b). Then, looking back on the development of the inquiry, Socrates says to Glaucon (443b7-c2):

> Τέλεον ἄρα ἡμῖν τὸ ἐνύπνιον ἀποτετέλεσται, ὃ ἔφαμεν ὑποπτεῦσαι ὡς εὐθὺς ἀρχόμενοι τῆς πόλεως οἰκίζειν κατὰ θεόν τινα εἰς ἀρχήν τε καὶ τύπον τινὰ τῆς δικαιοσύνης κινδυνεύομεν ἐμβεβηκέναι.
>
> Παντάπασιν μὲν οὖν.
>
> Τὸ δέ γε ἦν ἄρα, ὦ Γλαύκων—δι' ὃ καὶ ὠφέλει[78] —εἴδωλόν τι τῆς δικαιοσύνης, τὸ τὸν μὲν σκυτοτομικὸν φύσει ὀρθῶς ἔχειν σκυτοτομεῖν καὶ ἄλλο μηδὲν πράττειν, τὸν δὲ τεκτονικὸν τεκταίνεσθαι, καὶ τἆλλα δὴ οὕτως.
>
> Φαίνεται.

> 'In that case, we have seen the final realisation of our dream – our suspicion that, at the very founding of our city, we might possibly, with a bit of divine guidance, have come upon both the origin, and some sort of model, of justice.'
>
> 'Yes, we certainly have seen its realisation.'
>
> 'So this principle, Glaucon – that if you are a shoemaker by nature, you should confine yourself to making shoes, if you are a carpenter you should confine yourself to carpentry, and so on – really was a kind of image of justice. Which is why it was useful to us.'
>
> 'Apparently so.' (transl. T. Griffith; revised)

Here Socrates refers back to his earlier suspicion that the principle which they have been using since they began constructing the good city is justice or a kind of justice (433a). This time, Socrates describes the suspicion using the expression that they might have come upon both the origin, and *some sort of model*, of justice (εἰς ἀρχήν τε καὶ τύπον τινὰ τῆς δικαιοσύνης κινδυνεύομεν ἐμβεβηκέναι). In the same vein, Socrates describes the early principle as a kind of image of justice (εἴδωλόν τι τῆς δικαιοσύνης). At the end of Book 4, however, the principle is no longer some model, or image, of justice. The extended inquiry from Book 2 to Book 4 has enabled the interlocutors to conclude that the principle – or a more abstract version of the principle – really is justice. To use Socrates' expression, the dream has been fully realized (τέλεον ἄρα ἡμῖν τὸ ἐνύπνιον ἀποτετέλεσται).

[78] Griffith seems (correctly, in my view) to adopt Madvig's conjecture ὠφέλει over the MSS reading ὠφελεῖ adopted by Burnet and Slings. Cf. Adam 1902: note ad loc.

I want to suggest that an important parallel can be drawn between this development in the *Republic* and the development in the second part of the *Cratylus*. In the preceding assessment of names (391c-396c), Socrates has made a number of more or less implicit references to the principle that a thing's name should signify (or indicate) the thing's nature (or being).[79] Most of these references have been made in passing, without an explicit indication of the relation between the principle and the notion of natural correctness. But, in the assessment of Zeus' name, Socrates not only explains that the two parts of his name, when put together, indicate his nature (396a5-6: συντιθέμενα δ' εἰς ἓν δηλοῖ τὴν φύσιν τοῦ θεοῦ), but also adds: "and this, we claim, is what a name is expected to be able to do" (396a6-7: ὃ δὴ προσήκειν φαμὲν ὀνόματι οἵῳ τε εἶναι ἀπεργάζεσθαι.). Then, in the present passage (397a-c), Socrates observes that they have come upon some sort of model (397a6-7: ἐπειδήπερ εἰς τύπον τινὰ ἐμβεβήκαμεν), implying that the model is a model of natural correctness in the form of the principle that a thing's name should signify (or indicate) the thing's nature (or being). Finally, in the closing section (421c-427d), Socrates faces the problem of showing that one and the same principle of correctness applies to all names, even the so-called "first names" (πρῶτα ὀνόματα), i.e. the names which make up other names but do not themselves consist of other names (cf. 422c-d). Then, having shown how one can make first names indicate the being of things, Socrates leads Hermogenes to conclude that they have finally found what they have long been looking for: the expert of naming (424a5-6: Τοῦτο ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὅπερ πάλαι ἐζητοῦμεν, οὗτος ἂν εἶναι ὁ ὀνομαστικός). This mention of expertise reminds us of the central claim in the first part of the dialogue that there is a natural correctness of names because name-giving is the task of the expert name-maker (388c-389a). And it shows us that, all along, the search for a more specific account of the natural correctness of names has been understood to be a search for a more specific account of the expertise of name-making. Thus, when Hermogenes, following Socrates' lead, declares that they have finally found the name expert, he announces the same kind of conclusion that Socrates announces in the *Republic* by saying that their dream has been realized. The principle that a thing's name should signify (or indicate) the thing's nature (or being) – first simply used, apparently without much reflection, then identified and announced as some sort of model – has finally turned out to apply to all names, including first names.

How does the middle section (397c-421c) fit this idea of a parallel between the development in Books 2-4 of the *Republic* and the development in the second part of the *Cratylus*? This question leads us back to the question about the nature of the inquiry envisaged in the present passage (397a5-9). The aim of the inquiry, as described by Socrates, is to know whether the names themselves (αὐτὰ τὰ ὀνόματα) will bear evidence that they have not been given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου (μὴ πάνυ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου οὕτως ἕκαστα κεῖσθαι), but have some sort of correctness (ἀλλ' ἔχειν τινὰ ὀρθότητα). This inquiry constitutes an important difference between the development in Books 2-4 of

[79] Cf. 393a-e (Astyanax, Hektor), 394e (Orestes), 395a-b (Agamemnon), 395b (Atreus), 396a (Zeus).

the *Republic* and the development in the second part of the *Cratylus*. Of course, there are important points of similarity between the assessment of the existing Greek culture and education in the *Republic* (376c-412b) and the assessment of existing Greek names in the *Cratylus*. Indeed, as we have already seen, when Socrates mentions the custom-giver (*nomothetes*) in the first part of the *Cratylus*, he is best understood as drawing on the Socratic conception of the custom-giver known to us from the *Republic*. One of the most important tasks of this custom-giver, in the *Republic*, is to guide and supervise the production and performance of music (in the broad sense covering both poetry and music in our sense of the word), both in the education of the guards and in the culture of the city as a whole. Why this emphasis on music? It has been claimed that, in Plato's view, music is "the main vehicle of cultural transmission" and "the basic source of people's sensibility" in the moral sphere and other spheres of society.[80] While this is no doubt true (cf. e.g. *Resp.* 401d-402a), it is arguable that, according to Plato, the part of society which has the earliest and most continuous effect on the souls of the citizens is language (i.e. the names of things) and not music - as is indicated by the passages in the *Cratylus* (e.g. 439b10-c6) on the effect of names on people's souls which parallel the passages in the *Republic* (e.g. 401b-403c) emphasizing the enormous, and normally unnoticed, effect of music on the whole of society.

But if this is true, why is there no assessment of the correctness of Greek names in the assessment of the existing Greek culture and education in the *Republic*? Of course, one reason might be that Socrates and the brothers set out to define the education of the future guards (i.e. the elite citizens of the good city) and not the education of all citizens, while the cultural and educational effect of names is so early and basic that it affects all the citizens and therefore is not special to the education of the guards. Another reason might be that while Socrates and the brothers can quite easily agree that there is a natural correctness of music, it would take a conversation similar to the one between Socrates and Hermogenes to convince the brothers that there is a natural correctness of names. And since Socrates already has had to justify the digression into the education of the guards and the culture of the city in the context of the inquiry into the nature of justice (376c-d), we can see why Socrates decides not to go into the subject of the correctness of names (although remember Socrates' brief comments in Book 5 on the need to institute a new use of the possessive pronouns, "mine" and "ours", and a new use of the names of family members: "father", "mother", "son", "daughter").

This brings us back to the point that the inquiry in the middle section (397c-421c) constitutes an important difference between the development in Books 2-4 of the *Republic* and the development in the second part of the Cratylus. In the *Republic*, Socrates and the brothers proceed on the assumption that music has a natural function in society. On the basis of this assumption, they assess and purify the existing Greek culture and education in order to provide an outline of the musical culture and education in the good society. In the *Cratylus*, no attempt is made to provide an outline of good

[80] Burnyeat 1999: 251, 257; cf. 221-2.

names, whether by purifying the existing Greek lexicon or by making new names (cf. 424b-425b). Socrates and Hermogenes assess and interpret the existing Greek names in order to convince Hermogenes that there is a natural correctness of names. As we have seen, there are two main reasons why Hermogenes has remained unconvinced by Socrates' arguments for the natural correctness of names. First, the account in the first part of the dialogue had a very high level of generality. As a consequence, Hermogenes has asked Socrates to provide a more *specific* account (390e-391a). In the opening section (391a-397c), Socrates has already gone some way to fulfilling this request by identifying a model of natural correctness in the form of the principle that a thing's name should signify (or indicate) the thing's nature (or being). Second, the account in the first part of the dialogue had a very high level of abstraction. Socrates has identified the need for a more *concrete* account as a further cause of Hermogenes' lack of conviction. In particular, Socrates understands that the concrete names of humans constituted the core motivation for Hermogenes' initial view about the correctness of names (cf. 383b; 384d). As a consequence, Socrates has tried to show Hermogenes that the names of some famous humans (and even a few gods) are naturally correct. But this was only the beginning. Socrates knows that a much more comprehensive effort is needed in order to satisfy Hermogenes' need to be convinced that Greek names are evidence for, rather than against, the theory of natural correctness.

What kind of effort is needed to achieve this? Socrates is careful to point out that the subsequent inquiry will differ from the preceding assessment of names in some important respects. The aim of the inquiry, as described by Socrates (397a7-9), is to know whether the names themselves will bear evidence that they have not been given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, but have some sort of correctness. The expression "the names themselves" (αὐτὰ τὰ ὀνόματα) implies a contrast between the Greek names and something else. Most likely Socrates is drawing a contrast between the Greek names and something else considered capable of bearing evidence regarding the correctness of Greek names. In that case, the contrast is most likely between the Greek names and Homer (and the other poets). At the beginning of the opening section (391c-d), Socrates proposed that they needed to learn from Homer and the other poets. Since then, they have learned from Homer that the names of Hektor and Astyanax are naturally correct, and what makes them so (391b4-394d1). In the case of the Tantalids and their divine ancestors (394d2-397c3), however, Socrates has kept it unclear throughout whether Socrates and Hermogenes are still learning from the poets (as Socrates proposed they should) or examining the names without guidance from the poets. But then, in the present passage, Socrates openly declares that the subsequent inquiry will focus solely on the evidential value of the names themselves. What are the Greek names supposed to be evidence of? In the preceding assessment of names, Socrates simply claimed that the names are naturally correct. But, in the present passage, Socrates states that the aim is to know whether the Greek names "have not been given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου" (μὴ πάνυ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου [...] κεῖσθαι), but "have some sort correctness" (ἔχειν τινὰ ὀρθότητα). Socrates is lowering the bar. The Greek names are expected to bear evid-

ence, not that the Greek names are simply naturally correct, but that they have *some sort* of correctness.

Why does Socrates lower the bar? The reason, I think, is that Socrates wants to make clear what minimum result of the inquiry is needed for concluding (and thereby convincing Hermogenes) that Greek names are evidence for, rather than against, the theory of natural correctness. It should be clear why the inquiry does not need to show that the Greek names are simply naturally correct. The theory of natural correctness posits that name-giving is the task of the expert name-maker (cf. 388c-389a). As we saw earlier, this notion does not entail that the expert name-maker is the only one who can give names to things, only that the expert name-maker is the only one who *should* give names to things because he is the only one who can do it well (i.e. in accordance with the expertise of name-making). Also, this notion does not entail that the expert name-maker only gives names which are simply naturally correct. As Socrates later points out (429a-b), the expertise of name-making is surely like other forms of human expertise in that some expert name-makers possess the expertise of name-making more fully than other expert name-makers. As a consequence, some expert name-makers produce better (i.e. more correct) names than other expert name-makers. Thus, it would be unreasonable to expect the inquiry to show that the Greek names are simply naturally correct. In fact, the theory of natural correctness should lead us to expect the conclusion that the Greek names are not simply naturally correct.

But why does Socrates think that the inquiry needs to show that the Greek names have not been given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, but have some sort of correctness? Again, the theory of natural correctness posits that name-giving is the task of the expert name-maker. As Socrates pointed out earlier (389a-390a), expert name-making is like other forms of expert instrument production in that the expert name-maker looks to the form of the name, and – having found the name naturally suited for a given thing – he puts it into sounds and syllables. As we have seen, this conception of expert instrument production derives from the Socratic conception of expert production. According to this conception, expert production consists in looking to some form and putting it into matter. That is, the Socratic conception of expert production is intellectualist in the sense that it requires the expert maker not to rely on practice or experience, but to make use of his reason. Thus, on the Socratic conception of expert production, the notion that name-giving is the task of the expert name-maker entails that names should be products of reason. Now, in some other passages in Plato's dialogues, the expression ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου is used to distinguish the things which are subjects of expertise from the things which are not. If something comes to be ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, it is not the subject of an expertise. For instance, if wisdom (or justice) comes to be ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, it is not something teachable (διδακτόν), i.e. it is not the subject of the expertise of teaching (*Euthyd.* 282c; cf. *Prt.* 323c).

This kind of case should be kept distinct from cases of chance (τύχη). If something happens by chance, it can (but need not) be the subject of an expertise. For instance, as Socrates explains to Adeimantus in Book 6 of the *Republic*, in bad societies (such

as Athens) philosophical wisdom and virtue arise only by (divine) chance, whereas in the good society philosophical wisdom and virtue are the results of cultural education and philosophical teaching (492a; cf. 496a-497a). Also, a little earlier in the *Cratylus*, Socrates stated that the names of Orestes and Tantalos might well be the products of chance, but also held that the names are naturally correct (394e; 395d-e). As we have seen, this is because even if the names are products of chance, they *could* have been products of expertise.

By contrast, if something comes to be ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, it neither is *nor could have been* the product of expertise. It simply is not the subject of expertise. Why is that? In the *Sophist* (265b), the Visitor proposes to Theaetetus that they divide productive expertise into a divine and a human kind. Theaetetus does not understand the proposal at first, so the Visitor asks him the following question: Should they hold that the physical world – animals, plants, and lifeless bodies – is the product of divine expertise, or should they follow the majority view in denying this? That is, does nature produce these things by some αὐτομάτη cause that generates them without any thought? Or does nature produce these things by a cause that works by reason and divine knowledge derived from a god? (265c8-10: Τὴν φύσιν αὐτὰ γεννᾶν ἀπό τινος αἰτίας αὐτομάτης καὶ ἄνευ διανοίας φυούσης; ἢ μετὰ λόγου τε καὶ ἐπιστήμης θείας ἀπὸ θεοῦ γιγνομένης;) Thus, the Visitor proposes to settle the question by means of a sharp distinction between production which happens ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου and without thought and production which happens with reason and knowledge. In the case of divine production, the sharp distinction is warranted by the assumption that the divine producer (if such exists) necessarily has full mastery of the expertise of world-making and necessarily makes full use of the expertise in making the physical world. So if nature produces something without thought, it must be doing so ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου. But if so, world-making is not the subject of (divine) expertise.

In the case of human production, the same distinction would be unwarranted since the human producer (e.g. someone making a name) does not necessarily have full – or indeed any – mastery of the relevant productive expertise (e.g. the expertise of name-making). Therefore, if some human production happens without thought (e.g. if someone makes a name without looking to the form of the name), we cannot conclude that it must be happening ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου. It could be happening without thought because the human producer does not have mastery of the relevant expertise. In that case, we could say (using the distinctions introduced in the first part of the dialogue) that the producer fails to perform the action and does not achieve anything (386e-387d), or that the producer succeeds in performing the action, but does not perform it well, i.e. in accordance with the relevant expertise (388c-389a). And if the producer succeeds in making the product required by the expertise, we can say that he did so by chance and not by expertise (as in the case of the names of Orestes and Tantalos). Thus, the fact that some human production happens without thought is not enough to conclude that it must be happening ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου.

But what is enough? We have seen that the distinction introduced by the Visitor

to settle the question about divine production cannot be used in the case of human production because even if some human production happens without thought, it does not necessarily happen ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου. The converse, however, does not hold. If some production happens ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, it necessarily happens without thought. This, I believe, is the important feature of what happens ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου: that it happens without thought, not just possibly (or in some cases), but necessarily (or in all cases). What is involved in saying that some production necessarily happens without thought, or that some product necessarily comes to be without thought? In my view, the answer is, roughly, that there is something about the productive activity which makes it inaccessible to reason and puts it beyond possible rational control. This explains why something which comes to be ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, neither is *nor could have been* the product of expertise. On the Socratic conception of expert production, as we have seen, products of expertise are products of reason. But if some productive activity is inaccessible to reason and beyond possible rational control, the products of this activity could never be products of reason. Therefore, the products of this activity could never be products of expertise.

This, in turn, explains why Socrates thinks that the inquiry needs to show that the Greek names have not been given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, but have some sort of correctness. As we have seen, Socrates introduces the inquiry in order to convince Hermogenes that the Greek names are evidence for, rather than against, the theory of natural correctness. We might have thought that the inquiry, albeit important for convincing Hermogenes, only had little bearing on the question about the correctness of names. That is, we have might thought that an inquiry into the Greek names could only show that the Greek names are not products of the expertise of name-making (or at least not products of the expertise of name-making as conceived by Hermogenes and Socrates). This result would be evidence against, rather than for, the theory of natural correctness. But one could still maintain that even if the Greek names are not the products of the expertise of name-making, this does not change the fact that they *could and should have been* the products of the expertise of name-making. In which case, one could still maintain the theory of natural correctness which only posits that there is an expertise of name-making, not that all names, including Greek names, are products of this expertise. But now we can see that the inquiry, as formulated by Socrates, has a crucial importance for the question about the correctness of names. The inquiry into the Greek names could show that the Greek names are really given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου. This result would be definitive evidence against the theory of natural correctness. One could not maintain that even if the Greek names are not the products of expertise, they *could and should have been* the products of expertise, since the inquiry would have been shown that names in general, and not just Greek names, are not subject of an expertise. In which case, one could not maintain the theory of natural correctness which posits an expertise of name-making.

This conclusion affects our understanding of the other possible result of the inquiry that the Greek names have some sort of correctness. If Socrates regards the two

possible results as real alternatives (as seems to be the case), he must have in mind some special, more basic, sense of correctness. He cannot be meaning to say that the only other possible result is that the Greek names have some degree of correctness, at least not in the sense that the Greek names, to some degree, embody the principle of natural correctness that a thing's name should signify the thing's nature. If Socrates meant to say this, he would be leaving out a third possible result, viz. that no Greek name signifies the nature of what it names. So, unless Socrates is making a mistake or is not meaning to oppose real alternatives, he must have in mind some basic kind of correctness which names can be said to have even if they do not embody the principle of natural correctness. Therefore, what Socrates means to say, I think, is that the other possible result of the inquiry is that the Greek names have *some standard* of correctness – in the sense that the Greek names are best understood with reference to some principle of correctness, even if they do not in fact embody the principle. This is not a new notion in the dialogue. In fact, the same notion is present in the very expression "the correctness of names" (ἡ ὀρθότης τῶν ὀνομάτων) which implies, not that existing names are correct, but that there is some principle which makes names correct, and which should be used as a standard in assessing whether existing names are correct.

But if this is true, what is the relation between Hermogenes' original view and the inquiry outlined in the present passage? As presented by Socrates, there are only two possible results of the inquiry into Greek names. Either the names turn out to have been given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, in which case there is no natural correctness of names. Or the names turn out to have some sort of correctness. What is supposed to follow from this possible result? That there is a natural correctness of names? Or that there is some principle of correctness, which is either nature or agreement? The initial presentation of Hermogenes' original view gave the impression that the view was similar to the view that there is natural correctness of names, in that both views claim that there is some principle (nature or agreement) which makes names correct, and which should be used as a standard in assessing whether existing names are correct (cf. 384c-d). From this perspective, the second possible result of the inquiry would be consistent with Hermogenes' original view. In which case, the result would only show that there is some principle of correctness, which is either nature or agreement.

During the course of the conversation, however, the perspective has changed. In the first part of the dialogue, Socrates developed the argument that there is a natural correctness of names if there is an expertise of name-making. In the second part of the dialogue, Socrates identified several important principles of production and assessment on the basis of the assumption that there is an expertise of name-making. Thus, the issue about the correctness of names has become an issue about the expertise of name-making. If there is an expertise of name-making, there is a natural correctness of names. If there is not an expertise of name-making, there is not a natural correctness of names, and Hermogenes was right to think that agreement, and not nature, determines the correctness of names. This opposition is, I believe, reflected in the two possible results of the inquiry. Either the Greek names have been given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, in

which case there is no expertise of name-making and therefore no natural correctness of names. Or the Greek names have some sort of correctness, in which case there is an expertise of name-making and therefore a natural correctness of names. From this perspective, Hermogenes' original view fits the first, and not the second, possible result of the inquiry. If the Greek names turn out to have been given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, Hermogenes was right to think that agreement, and not nature, determines the correctness of names. Correspondingly, the second possible result – that the Greek names have some sort of correctness – fits Socrates' view. This means that the correctness in question must be the sort of correctness which belongs to an expertise. This supposition is what makes it the case that if the Greek names turn out to have some sort of correctness, Socrates was right to think that nature, and not agreement, determines the correctness of names.

This brings us, finally, to the question about the connection between the model and the inquiry. Upon first reading the passage, one might think that the connection is relatively weak. After all, the reference to the model concludes the specific account offered in the preceding section (391c-397c), while the reference to the inquiry announces the concrete account to be offered in the subsequent section (397c-421c). Upon reflection, however, we can see that the connection is relatively strong. In fact, there is a relation of mutual support and dependence between the model and the inquiry. The model supports the inquiry by providing Socrates and Hermogenes with a criterion for determining whether the Greek names have some sort of correctness (of the kind which belongs to an expertise). The criterion is, of course, the principle that a thing's name should indicate the thing's nature. Using this principle as their criterion, Socrates and Hermogenes can carry out their inquiry and establish whether the Greek names are best understood with reference to this principle – in which case the Greek names will have turned out to have some sort of correctness (of the kind which belongs to an expertise). It is difficult to see how the inquiry could be possible without this kind of model serving as a criterion.

At the same time, the model depends on the inquiry for support. At this point in the dialogue, Socrates and Hermogenes have only tentatively and provisionally identified the principle that a thing's name should signify the thing's nature as a possible candidate for being the principle of the natural correctness of names. Hence Socrates' reference to the principle as "some sort of model" (of natural correctness). The inquiry into the Greek names provides Socrates and Hermogenes with a possibility to confirm that this principle applies to existing names in general – in which case the principle will have turned out to be the principle of natural correctness. It is difficult to see how confirmation of the principle could be possible without an inquiry of this kind. Thus, the model depends on the inquiry for support, just as the inquiry depends on the model for support.

Having asked Hermogenes where he would like to begin the inquiry into the Greek names (397a5-9), Socrates himself proposes that they leave the names of heroes and humans because those names might deceive them (397a9-b6). What deception does

Socrates have in mind? And what is the relation between the present proposal and the preceding assessment of the names of Hektor, Astyanax, and the Tantalids? In the light of Socrates' contrast between the names of heroes and humans and the names of eternal and natural things (397b7-8: τὰ ἀεὶ ὄντα καὶ πεφυκότα), we might think that Socrates is claiming that the names of heroes and humans are liable to deceive us into thinking that there is no natural correctness of names because humans and heroes (often) have an unstable nature which makes it impossible for their names to be naturally correct.[81] In line with this interpretation, we might think that Socrates regards the preceding assessment of the names of Hektor, Astyanax and the Tantalids as having illustrated this problem.[82] But I think this is a misinterpretation. As we have seen, Socrates assessed the names of Hektor, Astyanax, and the Tantalids in order to show Hermogenes that the names of those heroes and humans are simply naturally correct. Socrates himself pointed out that some of the names (i.e. "Orestes" and "Tantalos") are likely to have been the products of chance, but – as we have also seen – that did nothing to change his conclusion. Also, nothing in the assessment of the names of Hektor, Astyanax, and the Tantalids indicates that Socrates regards heroes and humans as having unstable natures. On the contrary, Socrates emphasized that different kinds of humans inherit and reproduce their specific nature (e.g. a kingly nature), just as different animal species inherit and reproduce their specific nature (393b-394a).

The real reasons why Socrates wants to leave the names of heroes and humans are, I believe, the reasons offered by himself. The first reason given by Socrates is that many of the names of heroes and humans have been given in accordance with the names of ancestors, although it is not appropriate for some people, as they said in the beginning (397b2-4: πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν κεῖται κατὰ προγόνων ἐπωνυμίας, οὐδὲν προσῆκον ἐνίοις, ὥσπερ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἐλέγομεν). Socrates here refers to the principle that the people who come into being against nature (παρὰ φύσιν) should be given the name of the kind to which they themselves belong (394d5-10). For instance, the son of a pious man who is born impious should not be given the name of his father's kind (e.g. "Theophilos" or "Mnesitheos"), but the name of the kind to which he himself belongs (394e1-6). As examples of this principle Socrates chose the names of Orestes and Agamemnon. In this case, the bad offspring of a good man was named accordingly. But, as Socrates points out in the present passage, people often do not follow this principle, but instead name the offspring in accordance with the names of ancestors, even when it is not appropriate. That is, many names of heroes and humans are given by careless name-givers who just follow tradition without thinking.

The second reason stated by Socrates is that many of the names of heroes and humans are given almost as a kind of prayer, for example "Eutychides", "Sosias", "Theophilos", and many others (397b4-6: πολλὰ δὲ ὥσπερ εὐχόμενοι τίθενται, οἷον "Εὐτυχίδην" καὶ "Σωσίαν" καὶ "Θεόφιλον" καὶ ἄλλα πολλά). Socrates here refers to the

[81] Cf. Goldschmidt 1940: 111; Sedley 2003: 86-89.
[82] Sedley 2003: 86-89.

principle that the people who come into being in accordance with nature (κατὰ φύσιν) should be given the same name as their father (394d2-3). For instance, the son of an impious man who is born impious should be given the name of his father's kind. As examples of this principle Socrates chose the names of Tantalos, Pelops, and Atreus. In this case, the bad offspring (Pelops and Atreus) of bad men (Atreus and Tantalos) were named accordingly. But, as Socrates points out in the present passage, people often do not follow this principle, but instead name the offspring in accordance with their own wishful thinking. That is, many names of heroes and humans are given by naïve name-givers who give the offspring auspicious names without being realistic. Given this interpretation of the relation between the present proposal and the preceding assessment of names, we can see that Socrates is really claiming that the names of heroes and humans are liable to deceive us into thinking that there is no natural correctness of names, not because heroes and humans (often) have unstable natures, but because the names of heroes and humans are often given in a naïve and careless way which could make it seem that these names - and names in general - have been given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, i.e. in a necessarily irrational way.

Having proposed that they leave the names of heroes and humans, Socrates suggests that they instead concentrate on the names of "eternal and natural things", because they are most likely to find correct names in that area (397b6-8). The reason, Socrates explains, is that it is most fitting to take the giving of names in this area seriously, and perhaps some of the names were even given by some power more divine than the power of humans (397b8-c2: ἐσπουδάσθαι γὰρ ἐνταῦθα μάλιστα πρέπει τὴν θέσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων· ἴσως δ' ἔνια αὐτῶν καὶ ὑπὸ θειοτέρας δυνάμεως ἢ τῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐτέθη). That is, Socrates claims that they are most likely to find correct names among eternal and natural things, not because those things have the most stable natures, but because it is most fitting to take the giving of names in this area seriously. The naïveté and carelessness often involved in giving names to heroes and humans is here contrasted with the expected seriousness involved in giving names to eternal and natural things. On the basis of this expected seriousness, Socrates predicts that they are most likely to find correct names among eternal and natural things. Socrates proposes to concentrate on these names because they are most likely to convince Hermogenes that Greek names have not been given ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου, but have some sort of natural correctness – either because the names simply embody the principle of natural correctness, or because the names are best understood as the products of a serious attempt to make them embody the principle. Socrates' strategy, then, is to convince Hermogenes that the names of eternal and natural things have some sort of natural correctness and then to use this conviction to persuade him that Greek names in general, including the names of heroes and humans, have some sort of natural correctness, even if many names are not the products of a serious attempt to embody the principle of natural correctness.

## 2.3 The Greek names of eternal and natural things (397c4-421c2)

Having secured Hermogenes' consent to his proposal (397c3), Socrates begins the inquiry into the Greek names of eternal and natural things by assessing the names "gods", "daimones", "heroes", and "humans" (397c-399c) as well as the names "body" and "soul" (399d-400c). Subsequently, Hermogenes takes the lead and asks Socrates to assess the names of the Olympic gods (400d-408d) and the names of the sun, the moon, the stars, the natural elements, and the seasons (408d-410e). After this, Hermogenes asks Socrates to assess the names of virtues and vices (411a-419b), the names of pleasures, pains, and desires (419b-420b) and the names of belief, will, compulsion, and voluntariness (420b-e). Finally, Hermogenes asks Socrates to assess the greatest and finest names: "truth", "falsehood", "being", and "name" (421a-c).

The extended inquiry into the Greek names of eternal and natural things falls into three stages. First, Socrates outlines the traditional Greek view of gods and humans by going through the basic schema gods-daimones-heroes-and-humans (well-known from Hesiod) and the naturally connected distinction between the human body and soul (397c-400c). Second, Hermogenes picks up on Socrates' mention of the gods and asks Socrates to go through the Greek pantheon of Olympic gods as well as the natural divinities as conceived by the Greek tradition (400d-410e). Third, Hermogenes picks up on Socrates' mention of human virtue (as implied in Socrates' interpretation of the sequence daimones-heroes-humans) and asks Socrates to go through the Greek vocabulary for virtues and vices (411a-421c).

That is, the two major themes in Hermogenes' line of questions - the theme of traditional Olympic and natural divinities (397c-410e) and the theme of virtues and vices (411a-421c) - follow Socrates' initial outline (397c-399c). Even Hermogenes' final questions about the names of pleasures, pains, and desires (419b-420b) can be seen as following Socrates' concern with body and soul at the end of his initial survey (399d-400c), in that the virtues and vices (mainly) concern the soul, whereas pleasures, pains, and desires (more directly) concern the body as well as the soul.

The choice to follow the basic schema gods-daimones-heroes-and-humans when treating Greek traditional culture in general is not exclusive to the *Cratylus*. Rather, Socrates and the brothers basically follow the same outline in Books 2 to 3 of the *Republic* when they first treat the stories about the gods (376e-383c) and then treat the stories about heroes (386a-392c).

On this very general basis, I suggest that Socrates uses the initial survey (397c-400c) to remind Hermogenes of the basic Socratic way of treating the Greek tradition, and that Hermogenes responds appropriately to this reminder by following this way of treating the tradition in his extended assessment of the Greek names of eternal and natural things. Thus, we find yet another illustration of the claim that, if we keep in mind Hermogenes' character as an experienced Socratic philosopher and Socrates'

strategy as especially designed to deal with a Socratic such as Hermogenes, we get a very different, and much more Socratic, understanding of Socrates' account of natural correctness.

## 2.4 The Greek "first names" (421c3-427d3)

Impressed by Socrates' assessment of the greatest and finest names - "truth", "falsehood", "being", and "name" (421a-c) - and motivated by Socrates' use of the theory of universal flux in his interpretations of names (cf. esp. 401b-402d, 411a-c), Hermogenes asks Socrates how he would reply if asked to assess the correctness of the names "moving", "flowing", and "binding" (421c). Socrates and Hermogenes agree that these names are likely to be among "the first names" – the element names composing other names but not themselves composed of other names. For this reason, the correctness of these names must be assessed in some other way than by showing them to be composed of other names (421c-422c). In response to this challenge, Socrates shows how one can make the first names indicate the beings of things, not by composing them of other names, but by making them imitate the beings of things by means of their letters and syllables (422c-424a). Socrates asks Hermogenes to identify the person capable of performing this task, and Hermogenes concludes that they have finally found what they have long been looking for: the expert of naming (424a). Having reached this conclusion, Socrates proposes to return to Hermogenes' initial question and to consider whether the names "moving", "flowing", and "binding" imitate the being of things by means of their letters and syllables (424a-b). First, using a comparison with experts on rhythms, Socrates describes how the expert of naming must begin by making a division of letters and a division of beings and then proceed to attribute letters – or combinations of letters – to beings, thereby gradually building up whole names (424b-425a). Then, while recognizing the necessity of such divisions for an assessment of the correctness of the first names, Socrates makes some reservations about his own ability to make these divisions and considers the alternatives to the idea that the first names should be imitations of things (425a-426a). Finally, pointing out that someone claiming to be an expert on names must know how to prove the correctness of the first names, Socrates agrees to give a brief and tentative suggestion about how the Greek name-maker made the first names by considering the imitiative powers of letters and syllables (426a-427d).

As mentioned above, the section opens with Hermogenes asking Socrates how he would reply if asked to assess the correctness of the names "moving", "flowing", and "binding". Socrates first considers a few ways to evade the question – perhaps the names are foreign, or perhaps they would seem foreign if reconstituted to their original shape – but then decides to face the question (421c-d). His reason for doing so is that the question about these Greek names is connected to the general question about the relation between element names and composite names (421d-422b). Indeed, Socrates

and Hermogenes agree that the names "moving", "flowing", and "binding" are likely to be such element names (421d-422c). In support of this view, Socrates points out that all the earlier names seem to have "come back" to these names (422b10-c1: πάντα γοῦν φαίνεται τὰ ἔμπροσθεν εἰς ταῦτα ἀνεληλυθέναι). If what Socrates means by this is that all the earlier names were shown to consist of (or be identical with) these names, this is an overstatement. But if what Socrates means is that, upon further analysis, all the earlier names would have turned out to consist of (or be identical with) these names, this is a more reasonable statement. Socrates presents the view that the names "moving", "flowing", and "binding" are likely to be element names as the result of the preceding assessment of Greek names. In a way, that is true. But the assessment of Greek names was guided by two important assumptions. First, the early Greek name-givers possessed wisdom and made use of this wisdom in their name-giving. Second, the early Greek name-givers believed that everything is in flux. Given these assumptions, it should come as no surprise that the early Greek name-givers made a small set of element names and built all other names on that basis. After all, on a Socratic conception of productive expertise, that is how one would expect experts in name-making to proceed. Nor should it come as a surprise that the early Greek name-givers chose names of movement and rest as their element names. For believers in universal flux that choice seems only natural. Thus, the assessment of Greek names did not so much discover new facts as it confirmed already existing assumptions.

Having concluded that the names "moving", "flowing", and "binding" are likely to be element names, Socrates asks Hermogenes to join him in an inquiry into the correctness of the first names (422c). That is, Socrates feels the need to provide a more specific account of the correctness of the first names before he can enter the final stage of his concrete account of the Greek names and assess the Greek first names. Socrates begins the inquiry by emphasising that there is only one kind of correctness for all names, first names as well as last names (422c). And this kind of correctness, as the preceding assessment of Greek names has shown, is the principle that a thing's name should indicate the being of the thing (422d). What requires special inquiry, then, is not the correctness of the first names as such (since that is the same as the correctness of all names), but rather what enables the first names to perform their function. As Socrates puts it (422d8-e1):

> ΣΩ. Ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ὕστερα, ὡς ἔοικε, διὰ τῶν προτέρων οἷά τε ἦν τοῦτο ἀπεργάζεσθαι.
>
> ΕΡΜ. Φαίνεται.
>
> ΣΩ. Εἶεν· τὰ δὲ δὴ πρῶτα, οἷς οὔπω ἕτερα ὑπόκειται, τίνι τρόπῳ κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ὅτι μάλιστα φανερὰ ἡμῖν ποιήσει τὰ ὄντα, εἴπερ μέλλει ὀνόματα εἶναι; […]

> Soc. The later names, it seems, were capable of doing this by means of the earlier names.

> Her. Apparently.
>
> Soc. Good. And the first names which no other names underlie, in what way can they make the beings as clear to us as absolutely possible, if indeed they are to be names? [...]

Socrates claims that the later names were able to perform their function by means of the earlier names and implies that this is not possible for the first names which do not consist of earlier names. That is, in the case of a naturally correct later name, what *enables* the name to signify the nature of the thing is the combination of the significations of the earlier names which compose that name. Thus, Socrates makes a clear distinction between *the function* of names (i.e. the principle of correctness) and *the means* by which they perform that function. The question is, then, what are the means by which the first names perform their function? Or rather, what are the means by which the first names perform their function "as well as absolutely possible"? Socrates underlines this important difference with the unusually emphatic phrase κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ὅτι μάλιστα. It is not uncommon for Socrates to use the phrase κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν in the same passage as ὅτι μάλιστα or some similar phrase (e.g. ὅτι τάχιστα). In those passages, Socrates always describes extreme ideals such as separating body and soul (*Phd.* 67c), becoming like God (*Tht.* 176a-b), or controlling the number of men in the good city (*Resp.* 460a). But even in those passages, Socrates never uses κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν in the same sentence as ὅτι μάλιστα, much less in the same phrase.[83] The reason for Socrates' use of this unusual emphasis in the present passage is, I believe, that Socrates wants to alert Hermogenes to the point that they will not simply be looking for ways in which the first names can indicate the beings of things. Rather, they will be looking for *the specific way* in which the first names can perform this function *as well as absolutely possible*. Socrates' formulation invites the inference that there is another less optimal way in which the first names can perform their function, and this possibility will prove crucial both to the coherence of Socrates' account of natural correctness and to our understanding of the discussion between Socrates and Cratylus in the third part of the dialogue.

But first, let us consider the way in which, according to Socrates, the first names make the beings as clear to us as absolutely possible. Socrates asks Hermogenes to imagine a situation in which they had no voice and no tongue but wanted to indicate things to each other. In those circumstances, Socrates suggests, they would try to signify to each other by means of their hands, heads, and the rest of their bodies (422e). We might have expected that Socrates was imagining a situation in which he and Hermogenes would try to indicate *present* things to each other, and that his suggestion would be that they would do so by *pointing* to the things. But that is not what Socrates has in mind. Rather, Socrates imagines a situation in which he and Hermogenes would try to indicate *absent* things to each other. For example, if one of them

[83] The closest parallels to Socrates' usage in the present passage are to be found in the *Laws* (646a, 771e).

wanted to show something high up and light, he would lift his hand up to the sky, thereby imitating the nature of the thing. And if one of them wanted to show a running horse, he would make his body and his shape as similar as possible to the body and shape of the horse (423a). Generally speaking, Socrates suggests that they would indicate these absent things to each other by *imitating* the things with their bodies (423a-b). Having reached this conclusion, Socrates returns to a situation in which they have voice, tongue, and mouth. Socrates and Hermogenes agree that, in this situation, they will be making an indication of something to each other if they make an imitation of the thing by means of their voice, tongue, and mouth (423b). But the name is not simply an imitation (by means of the voice) of what one imitates. In that case, as Socrates points out, "we would be forced to concede that the people who imitate cattle, cock-crows, and other animals name the things they imitate" (423c4-6: Τοὺς τὰ πρόβατα μιμουμένους τούτους καὶ τοὺς ἀλεκτρυόνας καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ζῷα ἀναγκαζοίμεθ' ἂν ὁμολογεῖν ὀνομάζειν ταῦτα ἅπερ μιμοῦνται). Socrates seems to allude to vocal imitations of animal sounds in certain kinds of musical performance (e.g. comedy). A famous example of this kind of imitation is provided by Aristophanes' *Frogs* in which the chorus (who pretend to be frogs) repeatedly croak βρεκεκεκὲξ κοὰξ κοάξ. If this is what Socrates and Hermogenes have in mind here, we can readily understand why they simply reject the idea that this kind of imitation should qualify as naming.

"But", Hermogenes then asks, "what kind of imitation is the name supposed to be?" (423c9-10) Socrates responds to this question by contrasting vocal imitation in music and vocal imitation in naming (and speaking). First, vocal imitation in music is not done *in the same way* as vocal imitation in naming (and speaking). What Socrates means by this is that vocal imitation in naming is done *by means of letters and syllables*, whereas vocal imitation in music is done by means of some other kind of vocal sound (cf. 423e7-9).[84] Second, vocal imitation in music does not imitate *the same things* as vocal imitation in naming (and speaking). As Socrates goes on to explain, each thing – and here Socrates apparently only has in mind *sensible* things – has a voice (or sound) and a shape, and many things have a colour. But imitating those things is not naming them, and the expertise of naming is not concerned with these imitations, whereas the expertises of music and painting are (423d). Further, each thing has a being, just as it has a colour, a voice, and so on. Indeed, even colour and voice have their own being, as do all other things which deserve to be said *to be* (423e). This passage calls for some explanation. It seems indisputable that the expertise of music and the expertise of painting are concerned with imitations of voices (sounds), colours, and shapes. But why is the expertise of naming not concerned with imitations of these things? The first part of an answer to this question is that naming, as conceived by Socrates and Hermogenes, consists in indicating the *being* of something. The second part of the answer is that the being of something, as understood by Socrates and his fellow Socratics, is something intelligible and nonsensible (cf. *Resp.* 507a-b). And since the

[84] cf. Ademollo 2011: 274-279.

voice (sound), colour, and shape of something are sensible, they cannot be (part of) the being of that thing, even though voice (sound) as such, colour as such, and shape as such have beings of their own. Hence, the expertise of naming is not concerned with imitations of voices (sounds), colours, or shapes. Having distinguished vocal imitation in naming from vocal imitation in music (and graphic imitation in painting), Socrates and Hermogenes arrive at the following conclusion (423e7-424a6):

> ΣΩ. Τί οὖν; εἴ τις αὐτὸ τοῦτο μιμεῖσθαι δύναιτο ἑκάστου, τὴν οὐσίαν, γράμμασί τε καὶ συλλαβαῖς, ἆρ' οὐκ ἂν δηλοῖ ἕκαστον ὃ ἔστιν; ἢ οὔ;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.
>
> ΣΩ. Καὶ τί ἂν φαίης τὸν τοῦτο δυνάμενον, ὥσπερ τοὺς προτέρους τὸν μὲν μουσικὸν ἔφησθα, τὸν δέ γραφικόν. τοῦτον δὲ τίνα;
>
> ΕΡΜ. Τοῦτο ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὅπερ πάλαι ἐζητοῦμεν, οὗτος ἂν εἶναι ὁ ὀνομαστικός.
>
> Soc. Well, if someone is able to imitate exactly this of any given thing – its being – by means of letters and syllables, does he not indicate the being of the thing? Or is that not the case?
>
> Her. He certainly does.
>
> Soc. And what would you call someone with this ability? You called the previous persons the expert of music and the expert of painting. What would you call this one?
>
> Her. I think this is what we have long been looking for, Socrates. This, I think, is the expert of naming.

Socrates and Hermogenes agree that someone who imitates the being of something by means of letters and syllables thereby indicates the being of the thing (423e7-424a1). This confirmation that the vocal imitation in question amounts to naming concludes the inquiry into the way in which the first names make the beings as clear to us as absolutely possible (cf. 422d-e). The conclusion is that the first names do this by *imitating* the being of things *by means of letters and syllables*. At the same time, this inquiry concludes the search for a more specific account of natural correctness which began with Hermogenes' request to Socrates in the transition between the first and second part of the dialogue (cf. 390e-391a). As Hermogenes' words show (424a5-6), Socrates and Hermogenes have thought of this search for a more specific account of natural correctness as a search for the expert of naming. In the first part of the dialogue, Socrates tried to show Hermogenes that the name is an instrument for teaching and for separating being (387d-388c), and that name-giving is only the task of the expert name-maker (388c-389a). Then, in the opening section of the second part of the dialogue (391c-397c), Socrates began the search for a more specific account of natural correctness by identifying a model of natural correctness in the form of the principle

that a thing's name should indicate the thing's being. In the middle section (397c-421c), Socrates continued the search for a more specific account by confirming that the principle tentatively and provisionally identified as the principle of natural correctess applies to the Greek names of eternal and natural things. And now, in the final section (421c-427d), Socrates concludes the search for a more specific account by showing that the first names indicate the being of things as much as absolutely possible by imitating the being of things by means of letters and syllables.

At the same time, Socrates concludes the search for the expertise of name-making. In the first part of the dialogue, Socrates claimed that the correctness of names only depends on their possession of the appropriate form, and not on their possession of some specific matter (cf. 390a6-8: […] ἕως ἂν τὸ τοῦ ὀνόματος εἶδος ἀποδιδῷ τὸ προσῆκον ἑκάστῳ **ἐν ὁποιαισοῦν συλλαβαῖς** […]). In the present passage, Socrates claims that if someone imitates the being of a thing by means of letters and syllables, this person counts as indicating the being of this thing. Scholars have generally taken this claim to involve the idea that the correctness of names not only depends on their possession of the appropriate form, but on their possession of some specific matter as well.[85] If that were true, there would be an incoherence at the heart of Socrates' account of natural correctness, at least if we maintain (as I have argued we should) that, in the first part of the dialogue, Socrates really does claim that the correctness of names only depends on their possession of the appropriate form, and not on their possession of some specific matter. But I think scholars have been wrong to take Socrates' present claim as involving the idea that the correctness of names not only depends on their possession of the appropriate form, but also on their possession of some specific matter. Socrates only claims that the material constitution of the name - its letters and syllables - can be used to imitate a thing's being and thereby indicate its being. Socrates does not claim that imitation by means of letters and syllables is *the only means* of indicating a thing's being. True, Socrates has developed the present account as an attempt to answer the question about how the first names can make the beings *as clear as absolutely possible* (τὰ δὲ δὴ πρῶτα, οἷς οὔπω ἕτερα ὑπόκειται, τίνι τρόπῳ **κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ὅτι μάλιστα φανερὰ** ἡμῖν ποιήσει τὰ ὄντα, εἴπερ μέλλει ὀνόματα εἶναι;). Still, this only licences us to take Socrates as claiming that imitation by means of letters and syllables is *the best means* of indicating a thing's being, not that imitation by means of letters and syllables is *the only means* of indicating a thing's being. The obvious alternative to imitation by means of letters and syllables is signification by agreement, and, according to our interpretation of the present passage, Socrates here leaves open the possibility that signification by agreement is another way of indicating a thing's being. In which case, we can treat Socrates in the present passage as maintaining that the correctness of names only depends on their possession of the appropriate form, and not on their possession of some specific matter. Thus, we can treat Socrates' ac-

[85] Goldschmidt 1940: 146-151; Schofield 1982: 63-65; Baxter 1992: 56-85; Barney 2001: 95-96; Sedley 2003: 123-131; Ademollo 2011: 297-298.

count of natural correctness as coherent on this question. And, as we shall see in the next chapter, treating Socrates' account as coherent on this question is the key to understanding the famous argument which Socrates puts forward against Cratylus in the third part of the dialogue (433d-435d).

Having concluded that the first names make the beings as clear to us as absolutely possible by imitating the being of things by means of letters and syllables, Socrates returns to Hermogenes' initial question about the correctness of the Greek first names "moving", "flowing", and "binding" (424a-b). Once again, however, Socrates postpones the actual assessment of the Greek first names "moving", "flowing", and "binding" and instead asks Hermogenes to confirm that there are likely many more Greek first names than just these (424b).

This, in turn, leads Socrates to consider a further, more specific, question concerning the expertise of name-making. Socrates assumes that the expert imitator (whether a musician, a painter, or a name-maker) begins the production of imitations by making (or already possessing) a division (or classification) of the materials belonging to the expertise. And since the imitation of being involved in name-making is by means of letters and syllables, the most correct thing, Socrates suggests, is to begin by dividing (or classifying) "the elements" of the names, i.e. the letters, just as the experts on rhythms first divide (or classify) the powers of the elements (of the rhythms), then divide (or classify) the combinations of those elements, and finally proceed to examine the rhythms (424b-c). Similarly, we must divide the vowels (τὰ φωνήεντα) from the other letters and further divide the other letters into mute consonants (τά τε ἄφωνα καὶ ἄφθογγα) and continuant consonants (τὰ αὖ φωνήεντα μὲν οὔ, οὐ μέντοι γε ἄφθογγα).[86] Having made these divisions and further subdivisions, we must examine whether all the beings which are to be named can be divided and subdivided into classes, just as the letters could (424d). Having examined all these things well, we must know how to apply each thing in accordance with its likeness, whether the task is to apply one element to one element or to mix many elements mixed together and apply them to one element. Socrates compares the procedure to the one used by painters wanting to create some likeness. Sometimes they only apply purple or some other colour, while at other times they mix many colours together, as for instance when they are making skin colour or some other such colour, always depending on what colour the picture in question needs (425d-e). Socrates continues the comparison (424e4-b4):

> ΣΩ. [...] οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς τὰ στοιχεῖα ἐπὶ τὰ πράγματα ἐποίσομεν, καὶ ἓν ἐπὶ ἕν, οὗ ἂν δοκῇ δεῖν, καὶ σύμπολλα, ποιοῦντες ὃ δὴ συλλαβὰς καλοῦσιν, καὶ συλλαβὰς αὖ συντιθέντες, ἐξ ὧν τά τε ὀνόματα καὶ τὰ ῥήματα συντίθενται· καὶ πάλιν ἐκ τῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ ῥημάτων μέγα ἤδη τι καὶ καλὸν καὶ ὅλον συστήσομεν, ὥσπερ ἐκεῖ τὸ ζῷον τῇ γραφικῇ, ἐνταῦθα

[86] Socrates probably has in mind the following classification: (1) vowels: α, ε, η, ι, ο, υ, ω. (2) mute consonants: β, γ, δ, π, κ, τ, φ, χ, θ. (3) continuant consonants: μ, ν, λ, ρ, σ, ψ, ξ, ζ. Note that **ι**όν, **ῥ**έον, **δ**οῦν ("moving", "flowing", and "binding") each belongs to a different group.

τὸν λόγον τῇ ὀνομαστικῇ ἢ ῥητορικῇ ἢ ἥτις ἐστὶν ἡ τέχνη. μᾶλλον δὲ οὐχ ἡμεῖς, ἀλλὰ λέγων ἐξηνέχθην. συνέθεσαν μὲν γὰρ οὕτως ᾗπερ σύγκειται οἱ παλαιοί· ἡμᾶς δὲ δεῖ, εἴπερ τεχνικῶς ἐπιστησόμεθα σκοπεῖσθαι αὐτὰ πάντα, οὕτω διελομένους, εἴτε κατὰ τρόπον τά τε πρῶτα ὀνόματα κεῖται καὶ τὰ ὕστερα εἴτε μή, οὕτω θεᾶσθαι· ἄλλως δὲ συνείρειν μὴ φαῦλον ᾖ καὶ οὐ καθ' ὁδόν, ὦ φίλε Ἑρμόγενες.

ΕΡΜ. Ἴσως νὴ Δί', ὦ Σώκρατες.

Soc. […] In the same way we shall apply letters to things, both one-to-one, where that seems to be the task, and many letters together, making what they call syllables, and then putting together syllables from which names and *rhemata* are composed. And, again, from names and *rhemata* we shall compose something great, beautiful, and whole. Just as the painters compose a picture by means of the expertise of painting, we shall compose a sentence by means of the expertise of naming, the expertise of speaking, or whatever the expertise is. Or rather, not "we". I was led astray while I was speaking. For it was the ancients, on the one hand, who composed the names in the way in which they are composed. And it is our task, on the other hand – if indeed we are to know how to examine all the names expertly – to make such a division and to consider whether or not the first names and the later names have been given in an appropriate way. Any other way of stringing together our account will be inferior, I suspect, and not the way it should be done, my dear Hermogenes.[87]

Her. By Zeus, you're probably right, Socrates.

In his enthusiasm, Socrates proceeds from the division of the materials belonging to the expertise of name-making to the composition of those materials into names and

[87] This translation connects the final sentence of the passage (ἄλλως δὲ συνείρειν μὴ φαῦλον ᾖ καὶ οὐ καθ' ὁδόν, ὦ φίλε Ἑρμόγενες) with Socrates' description of the correct procedure in the assessment of names (425a7-b4). Sedley (2003) 42 seems to interpret the sentence in the same way, translating: "I'm afraid that to proceed in any other way is shabby and unmethodical, my dear Hermogenes"; cf. also Dalimier (1998) 156 and Barney (2001) 97 who both offer translations which seem to interpret the sentence in the same way. Another possibility is to connect the sentence with Socrates' description of the procedure involved in name-making (424d5-425a5). Cf. Reeve (1998) 71: "Any other way of connecting names together, Hermogenes, will be inferior and unsystematic."; Ademollo (2011) 299: "But stringing these items together differently is, I fear, faulty and unmethodical, dear Hermogenes." Viewed in isolation, the two types of interpretation could both be right. My interpretation and translation supplements the verb συνείρειν with λόγον or λόγους in the sense of "account" or something similar (for which compare *Plt.* 267a4-6; Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1147a17-14, *Top.* 158a31-37). Reeve's and Ademollo's translations supplements συνείρειν with ὀνόματα (Reeve) or something similar (Ademollo) (for which compare Dem. 18. 308) The main advantage of my preferred interpretation and translation is that the present sentence is more naturally taken in conjunction with the immediately preceding sentence.

sentences (424e4-425a5). Then, Socrates realizes what he is doing and reminds himself and Hermogenes that their task is to assess the existing Greek names and not to compose new names (425a5-b5).

The first part of the passage (424e4-425a5) provides important evidence about Socrates' view of the relation between the name and its elements (letters and syllables) and between the name and the sentence. Some scholars have thought that Socrates in the *Cratylus* treats names as sentences or, conversely, sentences as (strings of) names.[88] However, even if Socrates in a few passages suggests that a name can be viewed *as if* it were a sentence (e.g. in the case of Zeus' name; cf. 395e-396b), the present passage (and other passages) show that Socrates makes a clear distinction between names and sentences. The name and the *rhema compose* the sentence, and the sentence is composed of the name and the *rhema*. The two classes do not overlap.[89] But what is the relation between the name and the *rhema*? Socrates seems to distinguish between the name and the *rhema* on the basis of their different syntactical roles within the sentence (rather than on the basis of some difference in what they signify or represent). That is, paradigmatically the name and the *rhema* occur in combination within the sentence. However, Socrates also uses the label "*rhema*" outside the context of the sentence to refer to those names (in the general sense) which tend to function as *rhemata* within the sentence (e.g. what we call "verbs" or "predicative expressions").

The second part of the passage (425a5-b5) provides important evidence about Socrates' view of the relation between the specific account of natural correctness and the concrete account of the correctness of the Greek names. Socrates reminds Hermogenes that their task is to complete the concrete account of the correctness of the Greek names (ἡμᾶς δὲ δεῖ [...] εἴτε κατὰ τρόπον τά τε πρῶτα ὀνόματα κεῖται καὶ τὰ ὕστερα εἴτε μή, οὕτω θεᾶσθαι), but at the same time makes it clear that in order to do this expertly they need to make the kind of division which Socrates has outlined ([...] εἴπερ τεχνικῶς ἐπιστησόμεθα σκοπεῖσθαι αὐτὰ πάντα, οὕτω διελομένους [...]). Making this division is the first stage in the actual making of names as shown by Socrates' initial description of the division (424b) and his easy transition from division to composition (424d-425a). But making this division is also the last stage in providing a specific account of natural correctness. And it is a necessary part of providing a concrete account of the Greek names. Thus, as before, there is a real need to combine the specific account and the concrete account in order to bring the inquiry forward and, in this case, to completion. As Socrates puts it: "Any other way of stringing together our account will be inferior, I suspect, and not the way it should be done, my dear Hermogenes." (425b3-4: ἄλλως δὲ συνείρειν μὴ φαῦλον ᾖ καὶ οὐ καθ' ὁδόν, ὦ φίλε Ἑρμόγενες).

Having thus emphasized that an expert assessment of the Greek names requires the

[88] R. Robinson 1969a understands Socrates in the *Cratylus* as treating names as sentences; Owen 1971 takes Socrates in the *Cratylus* as treating sentences as strings of names).

[89] Fine 1977 offers arguments for the same conclusion against Robinson and Owen.

kind of division which he has outlined, Socrates goes on to make it clear that neither he nor Hermogenes will be able to make this division (425b6-8). Socrates compares the situation to the earlier situation in which Hermogenes requested an assessment of the names of the Olympic gods and Socrates made it clear that they did not have knowledge about the true nature of the gods and therefore would have to assess the names on the basis of human views of the gods (425c1-3; cf. 400d-401a). In the same way, Socrates now proposes, they should recognize that an expert division would have to follow the outline provided by Socrates, while at the same time not letting this recognition stop them from treating the subject to the best of their ability (425c3-7). In the earlier situation, Socrates and Hermogenes avoided the risk of hybris by stating clearly to the gods that they would not be studying the gods – since they were not able to do this – but only the human name-givers' views of the gods (401a). Similarly, in the present situation, Socrates proposes to Hermogenes that they avoid the risk of *philosophical* hybris by stating clearly to themselves that they will not be assessing the Greek names on the basis of the required division – since they are not able to make this division – but only on the basis of their more limited ideas and reflections.

Before presenting these ideas and reflections, however, Socrates also points out that, in addition to the risk of philosophical hybris, there is also the risk that the basic idea – the idea that things can be indicated clearly by being imitated by means of letters and syllables – will seem ridiculous (425d1-3). Socrates seeks to counteract this impression by making the case that no alternative account of the Greek first names is better. The first alternative is to claim that the Greek first names were given by the gods and are therefore correct. The second alternative is to claim that the Greeks received the first names from some barbarians, and that the barbarians are more ancient than the Greeks. The third alternative is to claim that the Greek names are so ancient that it is impossible to examine them, just as it is impossible to examine the barbarian names (425d3-426a1). The problem with these alternative accounts, according to Socrates, is that they are not real accounts but rather subtle ways of avoiding giving an account of the correctness of the Greek first names (426a1-4). The point seems to be that each of the alternative accounts concludes that it is impossible to examine the Greek first names, either because the gods gave those names (cf. 392b), or because the names are originally barbarian, or because the names are too ancient (cf. 421c-d).

The reason why this is a problem, Socrates explains, is that someone who does not have knowledge of the correctness of the Greek first names cannot possibly have knowledge of the correctness of the later Greek names, since the later Greek names are necessarily to be explained on the basis of the Greek first names of which the person knows nothing. On the contrary, Socrates continues, it is clear that someone who claims to be an expert on Greek names must be able to give a very powerful and clear demonstration about the Greek first names, or be well aware that he will talking nonsense about the later Greek names (426a4-b3).

Having emphasized the need for an account of the Greek first names, Socrates states his willingness to share his own ideas and reflections with Hermogenes, while

repeating that they seem to him hybristic and ridiculous and asking Hermogenes to share his ideas and reflections with Socrates if he is able to have a better account somehow (426b5-8). In what follows (426c1-427d1), Socrates offers a very brief and speculative reconstruction of the Greek name-giver's production of the first Greek names on the basis of considerations of the imitative qualities of individual letters. In the first stage (426c1-e6), Socrates concentrates on the letter *rho* and some of the names which seem to have been constructed by the Greek name-giver on the basis of the imitative quality of *rho*. Socrates explains (426d3-e6):

> τὸ δὲ οὖν ῥῶ τὸ στοιχεῖον, ὥσπερ λέγω, καλὸν ἔδοξεν ὄργανον εἶναι τῆς κινήσεως τῷ τὰ ὀνόματα τιθεμένῳ πρὸς τὸ ἀφομοιοῦν τῇ φορᾷ, πολλαχοῦ γοῦν χρῆται αὐτῷ εἰς αὐτήν· πρῶτον μὲν ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ "ῥεῖν" καὶ "ῥοῇ" διὰ τούτου τοῦ γράμματος τὴν φορὰν μιμεῖται, εἶτα ἐν τῷ "τρόμῳ," εἶτα ἐν τῷ "τρέχειν," ἔτι δὲ ἐν τοῖς τοιοῖσδε ῥήμασιν οἷον "κρούειν," "θραύειν," "ἐρείκειν," "θρύπτειν," "κερματίζειν," "ῥυμβεῖν," πάντα ταῦτα τὸ πολὺ ἀπεικάζει διὰ τοῦ ῥῶ. ἑώρα γὰρ οἶμαι τὴν γλῶτταν ἐν τούτῳ ἥκιστα μένουσαν, μάλιστα δὲ σειομένην· διὸ φαίνεταί μοι τούτῳ πρὸς ταῦτα κατακεχρῆσθαι.
>
> The name-giver, then, as I'm saying, considered the letter *rho* a good instrument for indicating change with regard to making the names resemble motion, at least he uses the letter in many places for this purpose: first of all, in the very names "flowing" and "flow" he imitates motion by means of this letter, and then in "trembling" and "running", and besides in such *rhemata* as "striking", "shattering", "bruising", "breaking", "cutting into pieces", "whirling" - all such names he mostly produces as likenesses by means of *rho*. For he observed, I think, that, in this letter, the tongue is resting the least and shaking the most. This is why, in my view, he has used this letter for these names.

Having described the name-giver's likely use of *rho* in making the first names, Socrates turns to consider his likely use of, among other letters, *iota* (426e6-427a2) and *delta* (427a8-b2) (cf. Socrates' initial focus ῥέον, ἴον, δοῦν). Rounding off his description, Socrates observes that the custom-giver, in making a sign and a name for each being, seems to have made the other first names resemble each of the beings with regard to their letters and syllables and to have composed the rest of the names on the basis of these first names by imitating the things by means of these very names (i.e. the first names) (427c6-d1).

I shall limit myself to making one brief observation regarding Socrates' description. I think it is fairly clear that Socrates takes himself to be describing, in a schematic and speculative way, how the current Greek lexicon of names was made (cf. e.g. the phrase: τὸ δὲ οὖν ῥῶ τὸ στοιχεῖον, ὥσπερ λέγω, καλὸν **ἔδοξεν** ὄργανον εἶναι τῆς κινήσεως τῷ τὰ ὀνόματα τιθεμένῳ πρὸς τὸ ἀφομοιοῦν τῇ φορᾷ). This claim should

not be confused with the claim that Socrates here takes himself to be describing the origin of language. Socrates apparently considers it possible, and perhaps even likely, that the Greek lexicon of names is more recent than some barbarian lexica of names (cf. 425e1-3). Also, this claim should not be confused with the claim that Socrates here takes himself to be describing the origin of the *Greek* language. There is no reason why Socrates would not suppose that, at the time the first custom-giver or custom-givers began to construct the current Greek lexicon, there already existed something resembling the current Greek language, albeit in some less systematic form. As a parallel, we can compare the theory about the origin of society in the Book 3 of the *Laws*. According to this theory, there existed small groups of people for some time before these groups came together and the first custom-givers decided to make, on the basis of local social habits, one custom for the new group as a whole (676a-681d). In the same way, I suggest, Socrates presupposes a period of Greek language-users before the first custom-givers - the same as those identified in the *Laws* - decided to make one Greek lexicon of names for all Greeks (or alternatively, one version of the Greek lexicon for a group of Greeks, e.g. the Ionians). For this reason, I prefer the translation "first names" rather than "primary names" for the Greek πρῶτα ὀνόματα. These names are not just *logically primary* in the sense that they are the units into which all the other names can be analysed; they are *temporally first* in the sense that they were the first names to be introduced into the Greek lexicon which has remained current until the time of Socrates and his interlocutors.

# Chapter 3

# Two opposing accounts of natural correctness (427d-440e)

In the third part of the dialogue, Socrates and Cratylus begin their shared inquiry when Socrates asks Cratylus whether he agrees with the preceding account or takes himself to have a better account (427d-428d). Socrates learns that, according to Cratylus, all custom-givers are equally good custom-givers, and all names have been correctly given in so far as they are names (428d-429b). In response, Socrates develops an analogy between paintings and names in order to make Cratylus give up these views (429b-431e). When Cratylus objects, Socrates develops an argument involving Cratylus and an identical copy of Cratylus in a second attempt to make Cratylus give up his stated views (431e-433b). When Cratylus remains unconvinced, Socrates presents Cratylus with a dilemma and shows Cratylus that he understands the Greek word for "hard" due to habit (or agreement), and that for Cratylus the correctness of that name therefore consists in agreement. Socrates concludes that it is necessary to make use of agreement in an account of the correctness of names, and that the best possible way to speak consists in using names all or most of which are similar to the things they name, while the worst way to speak is to use the opposite kinds of names (433b-435d).

After this, Socrates learns that, according to Cratylus, interpreting names is the best and only way to teach and learn about things (435d-436a). Socrates attempts to show Cratylus that if someone "follows the names" in the search for things, there is a considerable risk of being deceived (436a-438d). Socrates then shows that it is possible to learn about beings without names. Further, Socrates argues, one should not base one's learning or search for things on names; rather one should learn and search for things on the basis of things themselves (438e-439b). In the final section, Socrates warns Cratylus that the first Greek name-givers *did* give the first Greek names according to an incorrect conception of things, viz. the theory of universal flux. In a final attempt to influence Cratylus, Socrates broadens the ethical and philosophical scope of the conversation and urges Cratylus to take care of his own soul and give up the theory of universal flux (439b-440e).

Thus, briefly put, in this part of the dialogue Socrates' aim apparently is to convince Cratylus to give up his idiosyncratic views about the natural correctness of names. The first main purpose of this chapter is to show that Socrates' apparent aim is his real aim. Let me explain.

Scholars generally take Socrates, in the famous passage at 433d-435d, as confronting Cratylus with a genuine dilemma which shows that Cratylus' idiosyncratic views about the natural correctness of names cannot be right. If we consider these arguments, however, Socrates seems to conclude that agreement, and not nature, determines the correctness of names,[1], or that agreement and nature both somehow determine the correctness of names.[2] This consideration is likely to make us doubt that Socrates' apparent aim is his real aim. Why would Socrates put forward arguments which conclude that agreement - either solely or together with nature - determines the correctness of names, unless his aim is not really (or not mainly) to convince Cratylus to give up his idiosyncratic views about the natural correctness of names, but rather to undermine the very notion of an account of natural correctness, including his own account as developed in the two preceding parts of the dialogue?

One way of diminishing (if not completely removing) this doubt is to emphasize that, even if Socrates acknowledges agreement as co-determining the correctness of names, he only mentions the case of one name (σκληρότης) and only takes himself to have proved that the correctness of any name depends, at least largely, on its imitative powers, but may also depend on a degree of agreement.[3] However, this solution seems to violate the principle of fidelity by ascribing claims to Socrates which are clearly more moderate than those made by Socrates in the text. For, in the passage (435a), Socrates is most naturally taken as concluding that, given the initial dilemma (at 433d-434a), Cratylus must accept that the correctness of the name σκληρότης depends solely on agreement. The important question, given this state of affairs, is how we can treat Socrates' apparent aim as his real aim without violating the principle of fidelity.

My own view, in brief, is that we must give up two basic assumptions shared by all scholars. First, we must give up the assumption that Socrates is committed to the view that the natural correctness of a name depends (wholly or in part) on its possession of some specific matter (i.e. on its possession of letters and syllables which bear a likeness to the thing's being). Rather, as we have seen in the previous two chapters, Socrates maintains that the correctness of names only depends on their possession of the appropriate form, and not on their possession of some specific matter. Second, we must give up the assumption that Socrates, in the famous passage at 433d-435d, confronts Cratylus with a *genuine* dilemma. Rather, at 435a-d, Socrates confronts Cratylus with the consequences of accepting the false dilemma - formulated at 433d-e - which Socrates has set up in such a way that *if a name is shown to indicate a thing by means*

[1] R. Robinson 1969a; Annas 1982; Schofield 1982; Ademollo 2011.
[2] Grote 1865: 535, 542-3; Steinthal 1890: 106-112; Méridier 1931: 15, 28; Sedley 2003: 138-146.
[3] For this kind of interpretation, cf. Sedley 2003: 138-146.

*of agreement*, then Cratylus (but not Socrates) will be forced to make a choice between giving up the commitment to the general account of natural correctness (in favour of the account of correctness by agreement) or giving up the special commitment to the perfection of names.

The solution I propose contains three elements. First, maintaining that Socrates' conception of natural correctness does not make the correctness of names depend on their possession of some specific matter. Second, regarding Socrates' arguments, at 433d-435d, as based on a false dilemma. Third, explaining this feature of the dialogue *by reinterpreting the strategy behind Socrates' arguments*.

This brings us to the second main purpose of this chapter: to show that Socrates seeks to achieve his (both apparent and real) aim by employing a strategy which is especially designed to deal with Cratylus' extreme views and his stubborn and overconfident character. While scholars seem to agree with this view of Cratylus' character,[4] they have not appreciated how the nature of Cratylus' character affects Socrates' strategies for dealing with him. As I shall try to show, however, Socrates judges the chances of convincing Cratylus by means of fair and open argumentation to be so slim that his only chance of changing Cratylus' mind is by means of more forceful, if less fair-minded, forms of argumentation.

At 430a-431a, Socrates develops an analogy between names and pictures and trades on the ambiguity between image (εἰκών) and picture (ζωγράφημα) in order to make Cratylus implicitly committed to the view that it is possible to distribute a name incorrectly (since it is possible to distribute an image incorrectly, and a name is an image). Further, at 431e-432e, Socrates produces "the two Cratyluses argument" to argue against the view that an image must be completely like the original *in the special sense* that the image must be an identical copy of the thing (432b-d), even though Cratylus only claimed that a name (as a kind of image) must be completely like the original in the sense that the name must contain all and only the fitting letters. Thus, in this passage, Socrates clearly argues against a straw man rather than against Cratylus' position and uses this straw man argument to urge Cratylus to give up his position.

Finally, at 433d-435d, Socrates begins by asking Cratylus to make a choice. Either he accepts the view that first names indicate things best by being as much like them as possible, or he accepts Hermogenes' initial view that names indicate things by agreement, and that agreement determines the correctness of names. Unsurprisingly, Cratylus reaffirms his commitment to the former view (433d-434a). This is a false dilemma, in so far as it implies that the account of natural correctness requires a first name to be as similar as possible to the thing's being in order to count as a naturally correct name of that thing, and that names only need to be shown to indicate things by agreement in order for the account of correctness by agreement to be vindicated.

At the same time, however, Socrates is justified in implying that for Cratylus the account of natural correctness requires a first name to be as similar as possible to the

[4] E.g. Schofield 1982: 65.

thing's being in order to count as a naturally correct name of that thing, and that for Cratylus names only need to be shown to indicate things by agreement in order for the account of correctness by agreement to be vindicated. Thus, Socrates has set up the dilemma in such a way that *if a name is shown to indicate a thing by means of agreement*, then Cratylus (but not Socrates) will be forced to make a choice between giving up the commitment to the general account of natural correctness (in favour of the account of correctness by agreement) or giving up the special commitment to the perfection of names.

## 3.1 The character and views of Cratylus (427d4-429b11)

What kind of character is the Cratylus of this dialogue? And what is the nature of his views? As Hermogenes and Socrates turn to Cratylus, Hermogenes repeats his initial description of Cratylus (cf. 383a-384a). Hermogenes explains that Cratylus frequently causes him problems, because he claims that there is a natural correctness of names but does not say clearly what, more specifically, this correctness is. As a consequence, Hermogenes is unable to know whether Cratylus speaks so unclearly on the subject because he chooses to do so, or because he cannot help it (427d4-8). Having provided this description, Hermogenes turns to Cratylus and urges him to say whether he likes Socrates' account or has a better account himself. If Cratylus does have a better account, he should present it, so that Cratylus may either learn from Socrates or teach both Socrates and Hermogenes (427d8-e4). In response, Cratylus mockingly asks whether Hermogenes believes it is easy to teach and learn any subject so quickly, let alone one of the greatest subjects. Hermogenes denies this and instead approvingly paraphrases Hesiod's saying that if one should add even a little to a little, it is worthwhile (cf. *Op.* 361-2: εἰ γάρ κεν καὶ σμικρὸν ἐπὶ σμικρῷ καταθεῖο/, καὶ θαμὰ τοῦτ' ἔρδοις, τάχα κεν μέγα καὶ τὸ γένοιτο.). In the same way, Hermogenes suggests, if Cratylus can do even a little better, he should not hesitate but instead go on to benefit Socrates and Hermogenes (427e5-428a5).

At this point, Socrates enters the conversation with Cratylus, politely reassuring him that he will not insist on what he has said. Socrates has simply inquired into the subject (together with Hermogenes) as it appeared to him. Repeating Hermogenes' invitation, Socrates urges Cratylus to present his own view if he has something better to say, knowing that Socrates will be ready to accept this (428a6-b1). Socrates adds that he would not be surprised if Cratylus has something better to say, since Cratylus seems both to have studied these matters on his own and to have learned from others. Socrates concludes his invitation to Cratylus by suggesting that Cratylus enrolls Socrates as one of his students on the subject of the correctness of names, if he has something better to say (428b1-5). The conversation continues (428b6-d8):

> ΚΡ. Ἀλλὰ μὲν δή, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὥσπερ σὺ λέγεις, μεμέληκέν τέ μοι περὶ αὐτῶν καὶ ἴσως ἄν σε ποιησαίμην μαθητήν. φοβοῦμαι μέντοι μὴ τούτου

πᾶν τοὐναντίον ᾖ, ὅτι μοί πως ἐπέρχεται λέγειν πρὸς σὲ τὸ τοῦ Ἀχιλλέως, ὃ ἐκεῖνος ἐν Λιταῖς πρὸς τὸν Αἴαντα λέγει. φησὶ δὲ

Αἶαν Διογενὲς Τελαμώνιε, κοίρανε λαῶν,
πάντα τί μοι κατὰ θυμὸν ἐείσω μυθήσασθαι.

καὶ ἐμοὶ σύ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐπιεικῶς φαίνῃ κατὰ νοῦν χρησμῳδεῖν, εἴτε παρ' Εὐθύφρονος ἐπίπνους γενόμενος, εἴτε καὶ ἄλλη τις Μοῦσα πάλαι σε ἐνοῦσα ἐλελήθει.

ΣΩ. Ὠγαθὲ Κρατύλε, θαυμάζω καὶ αὐτὸς πάλαι τὴν ἐμαυτοῦ σοφίαν καὶ ἀπιστῶ. δοκεῖ οὖν μοι χρῆναι ἐπανασκέψασθαι τί καὶ λέγω. τὸ γὰρ ἐξαπατᾶσθαι αὐτὸν ὑφ' αὑτοῦ πάντων χαλεπώτατον· ὅταν γὰρ μηδὲ σμικρὸν ἀποστατῇ ἀλλ' ἀεὶ παρῇ ὁ ἐξαπατήσων, πῶς οὐ δεινόν; δεῖ δή, ὡς ἔοικε, θαμὰ μεταστρέφεσθαι ἐπὶ τὰ προειρημένα, καὶ πειρᾶσθαι, τὸ ἐκείνου τοῦ ποιητοῦ, βλέπειν "ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω." [...]

Crat. Well, certainly, Socrates, as you say, I have been concerned with the subject, and perhaps I could make you a student. However, I fear the situation is the complete opposite, because it somehow occurs to me to say to you what Achilles says to Aias in the *Prayers*. He says:

Aias, sprung from Zeus, son of Telamon, lord of men
all this you seem to speak after my own heart.[5]

And to me, Socrates, it pretty well seems that you're delivering oracles after my own heart, whether you've been inspired by Euthyphro, or you've had some other Muse inside you for some time without realizing it.

Soc. Cratylus, my friend, I too marvel at my wisdom since a while back, and I distrust it. It seems to me that we must have another look at what I am saying. For being deceived by oneself is the worst of all. For, when the deceiver isn't absent even for a little while but is always present, how is that not a terrible thing? Therefore, we should, it seems, frequently turn around to our previous claims and try, as the poet says, to look "at the same time both before and after".[6]

[5] *Il.* 9.644-5; transl. A.T. Murray

[6] This expression occurs two times in the *Iliad*. In Book 1 (342-4), as the envoys come to take away Briseis, Achilles says of Agamemnon: ἦ γὰρ ὅ γ' ὀλοιῇσι φρεσὶ θύει,/οὐδέ τι οἶδε νοῆσαι ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω,/ ὅππως οἱ παρὰ νηυσὶ σόοι μαχέοιντο Ἀχαιοί. In Book 3 (108-110), as Menelaos speaks in favour of making a truce with the Trojans, he says of Priam (compared to his sons): αἰεὶ δ' ὁπλοτέρων ἀνδρῶν φρένες ἠερέθονται·/ οἷς δ' ὁ γέρων μετέῃσιν ἅμα πρόσσω καὶ ὀπίσσω/ λεύσσει, ὅπως ὄχ' ἄριστα μετ' ἀμφοτέροισι γένηται. Two other passages containing the expression (without ἅμα) are *Il.* 18.250 and *Od.* 24.452.

In this exchange with Cratylus, Socrates uses the same kind of false deference which he used earlier in his references to Prodicus (384b-c), Protagoras (391b-c), and Euthyphro (396d-397a). Of course, at one level, Socrates is presumably being sincere in suggesting that he should become Cratylus' student - or at least that he should learn from Cratylus -, if Cratylus has a superior account of natural correctness. However, at another level, Socrates is most likely being insincere in implying that Cratylus might well have a superior account of natural correctness. That is, Socrates is being ironic here. But what about Cratylus? We might think that he must be being ironic. How else can we explain his apparent willingness to consider having Socrates as his student (428b6-c1)? Or his characterization of Socrates as speaking oracles while being under the inspiration of Euthyphro or some Muse (428c6-8)? I want to suggest that Cratylus is not being ironic in the first case,[7] but is being ironic in the second case. That is, Cratylus really does consider having Socrates as his student.[8] This gives us some idea of the size of Cratylus' ego and the degree of his self-confidence.

In the next sentence, Cratylus expresses the suspicion that the situation is the complete opposite, quoting the verses in Book 9 of the *Iliad* where Achilles says he agrees with Aias (428c1-5). How does this fit the description of Cratylus as someone who would seriously consider having Socrates as his student? We might think that what Cratylus means by "the complete opposite situation" is that, rather than Socrates wanting to become a student of him, he might want to become a student of Socrates. In that case, it seems difficult to believe that Cratylus really did consider having Socrates as his student. But this is not, I believe, what Cratylus means by "the complete opposite situation". Consider, again, the quote from Book 9 of the *Iliad*. Taken in isolation, these lines seem to portray Achilles as someone who is willing to listen and learn. Taken in context, however, these lines portray Achilles as someone who appears willing to listen, but is quickly overtaken by his strong sense of being in the right and ends up not being able to accept the advice given. If Cratylus means for his quote to be understood in isolation, what he means by the complete opposite situation seems to be one in which Cratylus is the one learning and Socrates is the one teaching. However, if Cratylus means for his quote to be understood in its context, what he means by the complete opposite situation is one in which there is no teacher or student, just one man trying - in vain - to convince another man. In my view, the second case is much more likely (especially given the self-confidence and stubbornness which Cratylus demonstrates later in the conversation).

Cratylus, in citing these lines, associates himself with Achilles and, more specifically, with Achilles' behaviour towards Aias in Book 9 of the *Iliad*. What should we make of this? Again, we could take Cratylus as not making much of this association, or we could take him as characterizing himself as a kind of Achilles and to be predicting

[7] Steinthal 1890: 104 notes that Cratylus here re-uses Hermogenes' ironic description of Cratylus as speaking oracles at the beginning of the dialogue, cf. 384a.

[8] Cf. Baxter 1992: 164-165; Sedley 2003: 131.

that he will behave towards Socrates, as Achilles behaves towards Aias. In the second case which I take to be the more likely, Cratylus shows us, once again, the size of his ego and the degree of his self-confidence by comparing himself to the greatest Greek hero at Troy. At the same time, Cratylus' choice to associate himself with Achilles' behaviour towards Aias in Book 9 can seem strange, especially in the context of a philosophical conversation. One might consider Achilles' general behaviour in Book 9 as a paradigm example of the inability to listen to reason and to change one's mind because of pride, anger, and stubbornness. Of course, in the final conversation with Aias, Achilles is moved by Aias' friendly request, as can be see in the quote chosen by Cratylus, but ultimately Achilles remains impossible to convince. Most likely, Cratylus would not share this view of Achilles in Book 9. Rather, Cratylus probably considers Achilles' behaviour as a paradigm example of the capacity to remain true to oneself and to stick to one's beliefs, even when one's own friends are trying to make one compromise.

If this interpretation is correct, Cratylus must be being ironic in describing Socrates as speaking oracles while being under the inspiration of Euthyphro or some Muse (428c6-8). Not just because Cratylus does not sincerely believe that Socrates has been inspired, but also because Cratylus does not sincerely believe that Socrates has been speaking the truth. Just as Achilles did recognize some truth in what Aias said but ultimately had to reject his request, so Cratylus recognizes some truth in what Socrates has said, but predicts that he will ultimately have to reject the Socratic account of the natural correctness of names.

This interpretation of the passage goes against the standard view which takes Cratylus here as expressing his whole-hearted agreement with Socrates' account of natural correctness.[9] On this interpretation, it seems natural to suppose that Socrates responds to Cratylus' whole-hearted agreement by saying that he himself does not trust his wisdom, and that they should take another look at the preceding account in order to avoid somehow deceiving themselves.[10] As a consequence, many scholars consider the whole discussion between Socrates and Cratylus as *a reexamination of the preceding account*, where Cratylus maintains (and perhaps somewhat radicalizes) the general features of the account, while Socrates downplays (and perhaps even discards) those same features.[11]

In my view, Socrates' response (428d1-8) confirms the alternative interpretation rather than the standard interpretation. Socrates responds to Cratylus by saying that he too marvels at the wisdom and distrusts it (428d1-2). This response is most naturally understood as implying that Socrates takes Cratylus as having said, ironically, that he

[9] Grote 1865: 533-535; Goldschmidt 1940: 153-154; Schofield 1982: 65; Crivelli 2008: 228; Ademollo 2011: 318-319.

[10] Goldschmidt 1940: 154-155.

[11] Grote 1865: 535, 542-544; Goldschmidt 1940: 155-156; Schofield 1982: 65-68; Crivelli 2008: 228-229; Ademollo 2011: 318-319.

marvels at Socrates' inspired wisdom, and as having meant that he does not trust it, and that he is not convinced by Socrates' account. Does that mean Socrates himself does not believe his own account of natural correctness? I do not think so. Rather, I take Socrates as playing along with Cratylus' view of the situation. According to Cratylus, Socrates (like Aias in Book 9 of the *Iliad*) should not try to convince Cratylus, but rather question his own position and consider whether Cratylus is right. That is, I take Socrates here as being falsely deferential, just as he was when suggesting that he should become Cratylus' student (cf. 428b4-5).

The same explanation applies to Socrates' suggestion that they should take another look at the preceding account in order to avoid somehow deceiving themselves (428d2-8). Of course, at one level, Socrates is being sincere in claiming that anyone, including himself, should be careful to avoid self-deception (in the sense of being falsely convinced that one is right), and that this principle applies to his own preceding account of natural correctness, just as it applies to every other philosophical idea. However, at another level, Socrates is most likely being insincere in implying that he is the one who should be careful to avoid being deceived by his own account. Again, Socrates is best taken as simply playing along with Cratylus' view of the situation, while ironically implying that Cratylus (and not Socrates) is the one who should really worry about being falsely convinced that he is right.

This alternative interpretation of the opening exhange between Socrates and Cratylus should make us disinclined to agree with the standard tendency to regard the whole discussion between Socrates and Cratylus as *a reexamination of the preceding account*, where Cratylus maintains (and perhaps somewhat radicalizes) the general features of the account, while Socrates downplays (and perhaps even discards) those same features. Rather, we should regard Socrates and Cratylus as contrasting two opposing accounts of natural correctness, where Socrates maintains his more moderate version from the first two parts of the dialogue and tries to make Cratylus reconsider his radical and idiosyncratic version.

Let us now consider Socrates' survey of the preceding account (428d8-429b11), in which the first major point of disagreement between Socrates and Cratylus is identified.

First, Socrates mentions the principle of correctness: the correctness of a name consists in showing what the thing is like (428e1-2: ὀνόματος, φαμέν, ὀρθότης ἐστὶν αὕτη, ἥτις ἐνδείξεται οἷόν ἐστι τὸ πρᾶγμα). Second, Socrates refers to the account of the name as an instrument for teaching: that names are used for the purpose of teaching (428e5: Διδασκαλίας ἄρα ἕνεκα τὰ ὀνόματα λέγεται;). Third, Socrates describes the view that there is an expertise of name-making, and that there are craftsmen of this expertise (428e7-8: Οὐκοῦν φῶμεν καὶ ταύτην τέχνην εἶναι καὶ δημιουργοὺς αὐτῆς;).[12]

[12] There are several possible construals of this sentence. It is possible that Cratylus takes ταύτην as referring to teaching (since Cratylus seems to regard the teacher and the name-giver *qua* custom-giver as the same expert; cf. 435d-439b), but Socrates is most likely to take ταύτην as referring to

Fourth, Socrates asks Cratylus who the craftsmen are, and Cratylus replies that they are the custom-givers which Socrates mentioned initially (428e10-429a1: ΣΩ. Τίνας; ΚΡ. Οὕσπερ σὺ κατ' ἀρχὰς ἔλεγες, τοὺς νομοθέτας). Socrates and Cratylus agree on these four main points.

Having established this basic agreement, Socrates asks Cratylus whether the expertise of custom-giving is like other forms of human expertise (429a2-3: Πότερον οὖν καὶ ταύτην φῶμεν τὴν τέχνην ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐγγίγνεσθαι ὥσπερ καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἢ μή;). Cratylus agrees that there are better and worse painters and house-builders, and that the better painters or house-builders make better products, while the worse painters and house-builders make worse products (429a3-10). Cratylus does not agree, however, that some custom-givers make better products while other custom-givers make worse products, or that some customs are better than others (429b1-6: Ἆρ' οὖν καὶ νομοθέται οἱ μὲν καλλίω τὰ αὑτῶν παρέχονται, οἱ δὲ αἰσχίω; ΚΡ. Οὔ μοι δοκεῖ τοῦτο ἔτι. ΣΩ. Οὐκ ἄρα δοκοῦσί σοι νόμοι οἱ μὲν βελτίους, οἱ δὲ φαυλότεροι εἶναι; ΚΡ. Οὐ δῆτα.). In consequence, Cratylus does not believe that some names (*qua* customs) are better given than other names, but rather that all names are correctly given in so far as they are names (429b7-11: ΣΩ. Οὐδὲ δὴ ὄνομα, ὡς ἔοικε, δοκεῖ σοι κεῖσθαι τὸ μὲν χεῖρον, τὸ δὲ ἄμεινον; ΚΡ. Οὐ δῆτα. ΣΩ. Πάντα ἄρα τὰ ὀνόματα ὀρθῶς κεῖται; ΚΡ. Ὅσα γε ὀνόματά ἐστιν).[13]

The first major point of disagreement between Socrates and Cratylus, then, is the question whether some names are better given than others (as Socrates believes), or all names are correctly given in so far as they are names (as Cratylus believes). The discussion of this point takes up the first half of the discussion between Socrates and Cratylus (429b12-435d1). At that point, Socrates identifies the second major point of disagreement which takes up the second half of the discussion between Socrates and Cratylus (435d1-439b9).

name-giving since he does not object when Cratylus identifies the craftsmen of this expertise as custom-givers and not as teachers

[13] As his views are presented here, Cratylus seems to hold that there are only correctly given names, *because* there are only equally good custom-givers, rather than the other way around. Why does Cratylus hold that there are only equally good custom-givers? It is not a commitment to the general view that, in any kind of expertise, there are only equally good experts, since Cratylus grants that there are better and worse painters and house-builders. Rather, it is a commitment to the special status of custom-givers. Some scholars have suggested (plausibly, in my view) that this commitment to the special status of custom-givers might well derive from a (radical interpretation) of Heraclitus' notion of the only true divine *nomos* which nurtures all human *nomoi*, which we find expressed in DK B114: ξὺν νόωι λέγοντας ἰσχυρίζεσθαι χρὴ/τῶι ξυνῶι πάντων, ὅκωσπερ νόμωι πόλις, καὶ πολὺ/ἰσχυροτέρως. τρέφονται γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἀνθρώπειοι/νόμοι ὑπὸ ἑνὸς τοῦ θείου· κρατεῖ γὰρ τοσοῦτον/ὁκόσον ἐθέλει καὶ ἐξαρκεῖ πᾶσι καὶ περιγίνεται. Cf. Steinthal 1890: 104-105.

## 3.2 The expertise of name-makers and the correctness of names (429b12-435d1)

Having established that Cratylus holds that there are only equally good custom-givers, and that there are only correctly given names, Socrates asks Cratylus whether the name "Hermogenes" (i.e. "Hermes-born") has not been given to Hermogenes (unless he belongs to the progeny of Hermes), or the name has been given to him, albeit incorrectly (429b-c; cf. 383a-384c; 407e-408b). When Cratylus replies that the name "Hermogenes" only seems to have been given to Hermogenes but really belongs to someone else, Socrates asks the following question (429dc7-d3):

> ΣΩ. Πότερον οὐδὲ ψεύδεται ὅταν τις φῇ Ἑρμογένη αὐτὸν εἶναι; μὴ γὰρ οὐδὲ τοῦτο αὖ ᾖ, τὸ τοῦτον φάναι Ἑρμογένη εἶναι, εἰ μὴ ἔστιν;
>
> ΚΡ. Πῶς λέγεις;
>
> ΣΩ. Ἆρα ὅτι ψευδῆ λέγειν τὸ παράπαν οὐκ ἔστιν, ἆρα τοῦτό σοι δύναται ὁ λόγος; συχνοὶ γάρ τινες οἱ λέγοντες, ὦ φίλε Κρατύλε, καὶ νῦν καὶ πάλαι.

Scholars generally agree that, in this passage, Socrates suggests that Cratylus' claim (or argument or theory) about names entails (or implies) that it is impossible to say something false.[14] This interpretation is based on taking ὁ λόγος as meaning "claim" (or "argument" or "theory") and δύναται as meaning "entails" (or "implies") in Socrates' final question (Ἆρα ὅτι ψευδῆ λέγειν τὸ παράπαν οὐκ ἔστιν, ἆρα τοῦτό σοι δύναται ὁ λόγος;). Accordingly, scholars translate the final question in this way: "That speaking falsehoods is altogether impossible, isn't this what your theory entails?".[15] I do not want to claim that this interpretation is impossible, although it is difficult to find other examples of δύνασθαι meaning "entails" or "implies".[16] But I do want to claim that, in the present context, it is more likely that ὁ λόγος means "(sentential) speech" and δύναται means "has power".[17] Accordingly, I translate the question in this way: "Is saying false things completely impossible? Does speech in your view have this power?".[18]

[14] Burnyeat 2002: 40, n.1; Sedley 2003: 131-133; Ademollo 2011: 327-332.

[15] Ademollo 2011: 327; similar translations by Denyer 1991: 72; Dalimier 1998 (although see also her alternative translation in the note ad loc.); Reeve 1998.

[16] As Ademollo 2011: 328 recognizes, even though he believes (incorrectly in my view) that δύνασθαι does have this meaning in *Euthd.* 286c.

[17] In what follows "speech" is used as shorthand for "sentential speech". I point this out because, while we may regard the application of a name to someone or something as an instance of speech, Socrates does not regard this action as an instance of speech (λόγος) because speech for him is sentential in nature. Cf. Socrates' description of naming as a part of speaking in the first part of the dialogue (387c6-7: Οὐκοῦν τοῦ λέγειν μόριον τὸ ὀνομάζειν; ὀνομάζοντες γάρ που λέγουσι τοὺς λόγους).

[18] For this use of δύνασθαι to describe the power (or capacity) of something abstract, cf. *Tht.* 151a-b (ἡ ἐμὴ τέχνη), 210c (ἡ ἐμὴ τέχνη); *Phdr.* 263b (ἡ ῥητορική); *Prt.* 324a (τὸ κολάζειν); *Gorg.* 508a (ἡ

According to this interpretation, Socrates responds to Cratylus' request for clarification by asking the general question behind the specific question about Hermogenes. The general question is not about what Cratylus' theory of names entails, but about Cratylus' conception of speech. That is, Socrates asks Cratylus whether he thinks that there is only true (i.e. correct) speech, just as he thinks that there are only correct names. We might think Socrates asks Cratylus this question because Socrates believes that Cratylus' account of the natural correctness of names *commits* him to the denial of the possibility of false speech, or because Cratylus' account *makes it likely* that Cratylus is committed to the denial of the possibility of false speech.

The first possibility seems very unlikely. Presumably, the idea would be that Cratylus' view that there are only correctly given names somehow commits him to the view that it is impossible to say something false. But this idea could only work, it seems, if no distinction was made between giving a name to something and applying a name to something (assuming that saying something involves applying a name to something). Otherwise, Cratylus could easily grant that it is possible to say something false (assuming that this involves applying names to things incorrectly) while maintaining that there are only correctly given names. And since Socrates himself has distinguished clearly between giving a name to something and applying a name to something, it seems very unlikely that he should think that Cratylus' view that there are only correctly given names commits him to the view that it is impossible to say something false.

The second possibility is more likely. As we have seen, Cratylus' views are radical exactly because they insist on the infallibility of custom-givers and the perfection of names. This kind of radicalism could make Socrates think that Cratylus is likely to be committed to the denial of the possibility of false speech, in so far as false speech is a kind of imperfection and speech is closely related to names. Indeed, Socrates seems to be expressing this very suspicion in his initial question (429c7-9):

> ΣΩ. Πότερον οὐδὲ ψεύδεται ὅταν τις φῇ Ἑρμογένη αὐτὸν εἶναι; μὴ γὰρ οὐδὲ τοῦτο αὖ ᾖ, τὸ τοῦτον φάναι Ἑρμογένη εἶναι, εἰ μὴ ἔστιν;
>
> Soc. Is it not even false when someone says that he is Hermogenes? For I suspect (you might think) that this is not even possible either (αὖ) – to say that this person is Hermogenes, unless he is?

Since, according to Cratylus, it is impossible to give Hermogenes the name "Hermogenes", Socrates suspects that Cratylus also considers it impossible to say that Hermogenes is Hermogenes. And, as it turns out, Socrates was right to have this suspicion (429d4-6). However, the fact that Socrates has this suspicion does not really

ἰσότης ἡ γεωμετρική). Also in the background is Gorgias' famous description of *logos* as a powerful master in his *Encomium of Helen* (sec. 8): λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, ὃς σμικροτάτωι σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτωι θειότατα ἔργα ἀποτελεῖ· δύναται γὰρ καὶ φόβον παῦσαι καὶ λύπην ἀφελεῖν καὶ χαρὰν ἐνεργάσασθαι καὶ ἔλεον ἐπαυξῆσαι.

explain why Socrates asks Cratylus about the possibility of false speech in the first place.[19] Why bring up the subject of false speech in a discussion about the correctness of names? In my view, Socrates is preparing the ground for his argument against Cratylus' account of the correctness of names, in particular the views that there are only equally good custom-givers, and that there are only correctly given names.

To this extent, Socrates begins his discussion with Cratylus using the same strategy he used to begin his discussion with Hermogenes. As we saw in the first chapter, Socrates asked Hermogenes about Protagoras' human measure doctrine (385e4-386a4), not because he thought that Hermogenes' views about names committed him to this doctrine, nor because he thought Hermogenes was likely to be committed to this doctrine, but because he thought Protagoras' human measure doctrine would provide a good starting-point for his argument against Hermogenes' views about names. In the earlier discussion, however, Hermogenes immediately made it clear that he did not hold the human measure doctrine (although he had occassionally been carried away to this view in the past). By contrast, in the present discussion Cratylus openly and self-assuredly declares his commitment to the impossibility of false speech. Therefore, whereas in the earlier discussion Socrates merely had to *remind* Hermogenes of the Socratic view about the nature of things (385e4-386e5) and the nature of actions (386e6-387d9), in the present discussion Socrates has to *convince* Cratylus that it is possible to say something false.

In the brief presention of his position on the impossibility of false speech, Cratylus hints at an argument based on the notions of being and non-being (429d4-6). In the *Sophist* (236d-264b, esp. 259d-264b), the Visitor offers a very extensive example of this kind of treatment. In the *Cratylus*, however, Socrates says that the argument is too subtle for him and his age (429d), thereby indicating that he will not be treating the subject in the abstract way which Cratylus suggests. Rather than focus on the abstract notion of saying something (τι λέγειν), Socrates turns to the more concrete notion of addressing someone (προσειπεῖν τινα). Socrates asks Cratylus to consider a situation in which someone meets him abroad, takes hold of his hand, and says: "Hello, Athenian visitor, son of Smikrion, Hermogenes" (429e4-5: Χαῖρε, ὦ ξένε Ἀθηναῖε, υἱὲ Σμικρίωνος Ἑρμόγενες). Assuming that Cratylus is an Athenian and the son of Smikrion (since Hermogenes is the son of Hipponikos; cf. 384a), it seems difficult to deny that the person who makes this utterance utters something true or false – or something partly true and partly false (430a1-4). Of course, one might object that an address to someone cannot be true or false, since only sentences like "Cratylus is an Athenian" or "Cratylus is the son of Smikrion" can be true or false. That is, one might grant that an act of addressing someone (if successful) is an act of saying something, while denying that it is an act of saying something true or false (since an address to someone is not a full

[19] Unless of course one holds that the real subject of the *Cratylus* is the conditions for true and false speech and not the correctness of names. For this (very implausible) suggestion, see Kahn 1973: 152-3, 161; Denyer 1991: 75

sentence). But Cratylus does not make this objection. Rather, Cratylus simply rejects the whole line of thought with the bold statement that the person in the example only produces sound, putting himself into motion in vain, just as if someone put a copper vessel into motion by hitting it (430a5-7: Ψοφεῖν ἔγωγ' ἄν φαίην τὸν τοιοῦτον, μάτην αὐτὸν ἑαυτὸν κινοῦντα, ὥσπερ ἄν εἴ τις χαλκίον κινήσειε κρούσας). In response, Socrates expresses some frustration with Cratylus, but instead of commenting upon the extraordinary implausibility of this statement, Socrates signals the beginning of a new line of argument (430a8: Φέρε δή, ἐάν πῃ διαλλαχθῶμεν, ὦ Κρατύλε).

In this new line of argument, Socrates approaches the subject in a more indirect fashion by developing an analogy between names and pictures (430a-431c). First, Socrates has Cratylus agree that both names and pictures (ζωγραφήματα) are imitations (μιμήματα) of things, albeit in different ways (430a8-430b5). Then, Socrates has Cratylus agree that it is possible to apply (προσφέρειν) both kinds of imitations – pictures and names – to the things of which they are imitations (430b6-c1). Having established this basic agreement, Socrates asks Cratylus to consider whether someone might attribute (ἀποδιδόναι) an image (εἰκών) of a man to a man and an image of a woman to a woman, and, conversely, an image of a man to a woman and an image of a woman to a man. Cratylus agrees that someone might do this, and that only the first distribution (διανομή) of images – i.e. the one which attributes something fitting and similar to each one (ἑκάστῳ [...] τὸ προσῆκόν τε καὶ τὸ ὅμοιον ἀποδιδῷ) – is correct (430c2-14).

What exactly has Cratylus thereby agreed to? Cratylus seems to understand Socrates to have been developing a specific point about pictures, taking εἰκών as equivalent to ζωγράφημα (cf. Cratylus' objection, at 430d8-e2, to the notion of an incorrect distribution of names). Socrates, on the other hand, understands himself to have been developing a generic point about both pictures and names, taking εἰκών as the genus of both ζωγράφημα and ὄνομα. That is, Socrates has been trading on the ambiguous meaning of εἰκών, leading Cratylus to believe that the point was only about the correct and incorrect distribution of pictures, while at the same time taking Cratylus to have agreed to a point about the correct and incorrect distribution of both pictures and names.

Anticipating Cratylus' reaction to finding out about this and at the same time putting pressure on Cratylus to accept the point being made, Socrates asks Cratylus to consider their friendship so that they can avoid fighting each other in the discussion (430d1-2: Ἵνα τοίνυν μὴ μαχώμεθα ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἐγώ τε καὶ σὺ φίλοι ὄντες, ἀπόδεξαί μου ὃ λέγω). Having made this request, Socrates goes on to claim that, in the case of both imitations (i.e. both pictures and names), the first kind of distribution should be called correct, while, in the case of names alone, the same kind of distribution should be called both correct and true. Similarly, in the case of both imitations, the other kind of distribution should be called incorrect, while, in the case of names alone, the same kind of distribution should be called both incorrect and false (430d2-7). Predictably, Cratylus objects that while in the case of pictures incorrect distribution might be possible, in the case of names the distribution must always be correct (430d8-e2).

Again, notice that Cratylus does not object to the idea that the distribution of a name, i.e. attributing a name to someone or something, can be true (if it is correct) – or that it could be false if only it could be incorrect. Rather, Cratylus simply denies that it is possible to distribute names incorrectly, just as he simply denied that the person in the previous argument said anything (cf. 430a5-7). In this new line of argument, however, Socrates has introduced the analogy between names and pictures and has traded on the ambiguity between image (εἰκών) and picture (ζωγράφημα) in order to make Cratylus implicitly committed to the view that it is possible to distribute a name incorrectly (since it is possible to distribute an image incorrectly, and a name is an image). This puts the burden of proof on Cratylus. If Cratylus wants to renounce his apparent commitment to the possibility of distributing names incorrectly, he must produce some counterargument to Socrates' analogy between names and pictures. Accordingly, Socrates challenges Cratylus to state the relevant difference between the distribution of pictures and the distribution of names (430e3). Socrates first asks Cratylus to confirm that it is possible to walk up to some man and say to him "This is your picture" and then, as it happens, either show him an image of him (i.e. of a man) or an image of a woman (where showing him the image means bringing the image into his visual perception). When Cratylus agrees with this, Socrates asks him to agree that it is possible to walk up to the same man and say "This is your name" and then, as it happens, put into his auditory perception an imitation of him (i.e. of a man), thereby saying that he is man, or an imitation of the human female, thereby saying that he is a woman. At this point, Cratylus is finally willing to agree that the incorrect distribution of names is possible (430e3-431a7).

Socrates commends Cratylus for this concession and remarks that they should not fight about this topic (431a8-9: Καλῶς γε σὺ ποιῶν, ὦ φίλε, εἰ ἔστι τοῦτο οὕτως· οὐδὲν γὰρ δεῖ νῦν πάνυ διαμάχεσθαι περὶ αὐτοῦ). Having secured Cratylus' agreement, Socrates first returns to his former point that if there is this kind of distribution also in the case of names (and not only in the case of pictures), then we want to call the correct distribution of names "saying something true" (ἀληθεύειν) and incorrect distribution of names "saying something false" (ψεύδεσθαι) (431a9-b3; cf. 430d2-7). Having repeated this point, Socrates makes the new point that if it is possible to distribute names incorrectly – that is, if it is possible to attribute unfitting names to someone or something –, then it must be possible to do the same with *rhemata*. If it is possible to classify *rhemata* and names in this way (i.e. as things which can be distributed incorrectly and falsely), the same must be true of sentences (λόγοι), since these consist in the composition of names and *rhemata* (431b3-c2). Thus, Socrates finally makes Cratylus agree that false (sentential) speech is possible.

Before we move on, let us consider Socrates' underlying reasoning in this passage. First, why does Socrates think that it must be possible to attribute unfitting *rhemata* to someone or something if it is possible to do this with names? Socrates generally seems to consider *rhemata* as a kind of names, so we might think that Socrates is making the simple observation that since *rhemata* are a specific kind of names, it must be possible

to use *rhemata* in the same way it is possible to use names in general. However, in this passage Socrates is clearly treating *rhemata* as ranking alongside names and not as already included among names. That is, Socrates has not been talking about names in general, but about names in contradistinction to *rhemata*. As mentioned earlier, Socrates seems to distinguish between the name and the *rhema* on the basis of their different syntactical roles within the sentence (rather than on the basis of some difference in what they signify or represent). That is, paradigmatically the name and the *rhema* occur in combination within the sentence. However, as we also mentioned earlier, Socrates also uses the label "*rhema*" outside the context of the sentence to refer to those names (in the general sense) which tend to function as *rhemata* within the sentence (e.g. what we call "verbs" or "predicative expressions"). In this passage, Socrates makes the claim that it is possible to attribute such free-standing *rhemata* to someone or something incorrectly. His argument seems to be based on similarity. Since names and *rhemata* are similar, it must be possible to attribute free-standing *rhemata* incorrectly if it is possible to attribute free-standing names incorrectly.

Second, why does Socrates think that it must be possible to attribute unfitting sentences to someone or something if it is possible to do this with names and *rhemata*? The basis for Socrates' claim seems to be an argument from composition. Since it is possible to attribute the name and the *rhema* (i.e. the parts of the sentence) to someone or something incorrectly, it must also be possible to attribute the sentence (i.e. the whole composed of those parts) to someone or something incorrectly. The analogy between names and pictures supports this argument from composition. In the case of pictures, it clearly holds that if it is possible to attribute two simple pictures to someone or something incorrectly, it is also possible to attribute a complex picture (i.e. a whole composed of two simple pictures) to someone or something incorrectly. Thus, Socrates convinces Cratylus of the possibility of false (sentential) speech by employing an argument from composition which is supported by the analogy between names and pictures.

A little earlier, I made the claim that Socrates brings up the subject of false (sentential) speech in his discussion with Cratylus in order to prepare the ground for his argument against Cratylus' account of the correctness of names, in particular the views that there are only equally good custom-givers, and that there are only correctly given names. In his attempt to convince Cratylus of the possibility of false speech, Socrates set up the analogy between names and pictures (430a-b) and used one aspect of the analogy to convince Cratylus that it is possible to *distribute* (or attribute) a name to someone or something incorrectly (430b-431a). Having established this analogy and having made Cratylus agree to one of its important aspects, Socrates is now ready to use another aspect of the analogy in his attempt to convince Cratylus that it is possible to *make* (or give) a name of someone or something incorrectly (431c4-e8).

Socrates begins the new line of argument by having Cratylus agree that the making of names is similar to the making of pictures with respect to the fact that, in the case of pictures, one can either render (ἀποδιδόναι) all the colours and shapes or not render

all but leave some out and add others – and make the colours more numerous and the shapes larger (431c5-9).[20] Cratylus further agrees that while the person who renders everything renders good pictures and images, the person who either adds or subtracts something also produces pictures and images, albeit bad ones (431c10-431d1). Socrates' reference to images as well as pictures indicates the view that the observation is true of pictures *qua* images. That is, the specific point about pictures generalizes to a point about images. Accordingly, Socrates proceeds to apply the same reasoning to names *qua* images and to the name-maker *qua* imitator (431d2-4: Τί δὲ ὁ διὰ τῶν συλλαβῶν τε καὶ γραμμάτων τὴν οὐσίαν τῶν πραγμάτων ἀπομιμούμενος; ἆρα οὐ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον […]). If someone renders all the fitting letters and syllables, then the image – that is the name – will be good, but if someone on occasion leaves out or adds some details, there will be an image, albeit not a good one. "As a consequence", Socrates asks Cratylus to confirm, "will some names be well-made and other names be badly made?" (431d7-8: ὥστε τὰ μὲν καλῶς εἰργασμένα ἔσται τῶν ὀνομάτων, τὰ δὲ κακῶς;). Cratylus, realizing that he is about to contradict his own position (cf. 428b), answers Socrates with a reluctant "perhaps" (431d9: ἴσως). Socrates, not without some degree of irony, responds with a further question: "Perhaps, then, the first person will be a good name-maker and the second person will be a bad one?" (431e1-2: Ἴσως ἄρα ἔσται ὁ μὲν ἀγαθὸς δημιουργὸς ὀνομάτων, ὁ δὲ κακός;). Cratylus confirms this and further confirms that the name of this expert is "custom-giver" (431e3-5). Socrates then concludes the argument (431e6-432a4):

> ΣΩ. Ἴσως ἄρα νὴ Δί' ἔσται, ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις τέχναις, καὶ νομοθέτης ὁ μὲν ἀγαθός, ὁ δὲ κακός, ἐάνπερ τὰ ἔμπροσθεν ἐκεῖνα ὁμολογηθῇ ἡμῖν.
>
> ΚΡ. Ἔστι ταῦτα. ἀλλ' ὅρα, ὦ Σώκρατες· ὅταν ταῦτα τὰ γράμματα, τό τε ἄλφα καὶ τὸ βῆτα καὶ ἕκαστον τῶν στοιχείων, τοῖς ὀνόμασιν ἀποδιδῶμεν τῇ γραμματικῇ τέχνῃ, ἐάν τι ἀφέλωμεν ἢ προσθῶμεν ἢ μεταθῶμέν τι, <οὐ> γέγραπται μὲν ἡμῖν τὸ ὄνομα, οὐ μέντοι ὀρθῶς, ἀλλὰ τὸ παράπαν οὐδὲ γέγραπται, ἀλλ' εὐθὺς ἕτερόν ἐστιν ἐάν τι τούτων πάθῃ.
>
> Soc. Perhaps, then, by Zeus, just as in the other kinds of expertise, the first will be a good custom-giver and the second will be a bad one – that is, *if* we agree on the former points.
>
> Crat. That's right. But you see, Socrates, when we render these letters – alpha, beta, and each of the letters – in the names by means of the expertise of writing, then if we remove, add, or transpose something, it is not the case that we have written the name, though incorrectly. Rather, we have not written the name at all, but the name is immediately something different if it is affected by any of these changes.

[20] Socrates here uses the verb ἀποδιδόναι with the same meaning ("to render") as in his description of name-making in the first part of the dialogue (389a-390a).

Having finally reached the intended conclusion, Socrates exclaims (νὴ Δί') that there are good and bad custom-givers, just as there are good and bad experts within the other kinds of expertise. Socrates adds that this conclusion follows if they agree on the former points (ἐάνπερ τὰ ἔμπροσθεν ἐκεῖνα ὁμολογηθῇ ἡμῖν). We might think that Socrates makes this addition mainly in order to put pressure on Cratylus to accept the conclusion by pointing to the already established common ground and its connection to the present conclusion ("since we have agreed on the former points"). However, if we consider Cratylus' tendency simply to reject undesired conclusions, it seems more likely that Socrates mainly signals that he is not confident that Cratylus will accept the conclusion ("that is – *if* we agree on the former points"). As expected, Cratylus once again rejects the undesired conclusion by making an extraordinarily implausible objection. According to Cratylus, when we write a name, we either write the name correctly or (if we remove, add, or transpose something) we do not write the name at all (431e9-432a4). Cratylus seems to direct this objection against the former point that the making of names is similar to the making of pictures with respect to the fact that, in the case of pictures, one can either render all the colours and shapes or not render all but leave some out and add others – and make the colours more numerous and the shapes larger (431c5-9). Thus, the present situation is very similar to the earlier situation in which Cratylus simply rejected Socrates' whole line of argument with the implausible claim that the person in Socrates' example did not say anything but only produced sound (430a5-7). However, there are some important differences between the two situations.

First, while Cratylus' general objection in the present situation is implausible, there clearly are cases in which the removal, addition, or transposition of a single letter seems to make the name into a different name or into no name at all. Also, while Cratylus' reference to the *writing* of names is unexpected, there could be something to the idea that *if he were right about the writing of names*, then he might be right that the correctness of names is such that when we produce a name (either by giving the name or by writing it) we either produce the name correctly or we do not produce the name at all.

Second, while Socrates disagrees with Cratylus' objection, he does not simply move on to a new line of argument without engaging with the objection. Rather, Socrates warns Cratylus that there is something wrongheaded about this way of looking at the topic (432a5-6: Μὴ γὰρ οὐ καλῶς σκοπῶμεν οὕτω σκοποῦντες, ὦ Κρατύλε). Socrates explains that what Cratylus says might be true of those things which by necessity either are or are not of a certain number. For example, if one subtracts or adds something to the number ten (considered by itself), it has immediately become some other number (432a8-432b1). However, Socrates continues, this is not the correctness of something qualitative and of images in general. On the contrary, in the making of an image one should not render everything completely as the thing is (i.e. the thing of which one makes an image), if it is to be an image (432b1-4: τοῦ δὲ ποιοῦ τινος καὶ συμπάσης εἰκόνος μὴ οὐχ αὕτη <ᾖ> ἡ ὀρθότης, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐναντίον οὐδὲ τὸ παράπαν

δέῃ πάντα ἀποδοῦναι οἷόν ἐστιν ᾧ εἰκάζει, εἰ μέλλει εἰκὼν εἶναι).

Socrates illustrates this point by asking Cratylus to imagine that some god decided to make an image of Cratylus. If this god not only made an image of Cratylus' colour and shape (as painters do) but also of everything else (including Cratylus' soul), would the result be Cratylus and an image of Cratylus or two Cratyluses? Cratylus replies that the result would be two Cratyluses (432b4-c6). In that case, Socrates continues, this example should make Cratylus understand that they must look for a different kind of correctness regarding images and the things they just mentioned, and that they should not force the point that if something is absent or added, then it is no longer an image (432c7-d1). Or is Cratylus not aware, Socrates asks, how far images are from having the same properties as the things of which they are images? (432d1-3: ἢ οὐκ αἰσθάνῃ ὅσου ἐνδέουσιν αἱ εἰκόνες τὰ αὐτὰ ἔχειν ἐκείνοις ὧν εἰκόνες εἰσίν;).

Indeed, Socrates continues, the names would have a ridiculous effect on the things of which they are names, if the names were made completely like those things. For in that case everything would be double, and no one would be able to say about anything whether it was the thing or the name (432d5-9). In conclusion, Socrates urges Cratylus to be confident in allowing that one name can be correctly given while another name is not. Cratylus should not force the point that a name must have all the fitting letters in order to be completely like the thing of which it is a name. Rather, he should allow that one can add an unfitting letter (432d11-e3: Θαρρῶν τοίνυν, ὦ γενναῖε, ἔα καὶ ὄνομα τὸ μὲν εὖ κεῖσθαι, τὸ δὲ μή, καὶ μὴ ἀνάγκαζε πάντ' ἔχειν τὰ γράμματα, ἵνα κομιδῇ ᾖ τοιοῦτον οἷόνπερ οὗ ὄνομά ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἔα καὶ τὸ μὴ προσῆκον γράμμα ἐπιφέρειν).

Cratylus agrees with Socrates, but what exactly makes him agree? Upon inspection, Socrates' argument seems so loosely connected to Cratylus' claim that we have to wonder whether Socrates is arguing against a straw man rather than against Cratylus' position. As we have seen, Cratylus' claim is that the correctness of names is such that when we produce a name (either by giving the name or by writing it), we either produce the name correctly or we do not produce the name at all (if we add, subtract, or transpose something). In response, Socrates seeks to show that it is wrong to think that an image of a thing must be completely like the thing, because in that case the image will no longer be an image but an identical copy of the thing.

Of course, Cratylus agrees that the name is an image, and Cratylus also believes that a name (as a kind of image) must be completely like the original in order to be a name (even if Cratylus does not believe this about images in general; cf. 431c about pictures). However, Cratylus has clearly not expressed the view that a name (as a kind of image) must be completely like the original *in the special sense* that the name must be an identical copy of the thing. Further, Cratylus' view that a name (as a kind of image) must be completely like the original in the sense that the name must contain all and only the fitting letters clearly does not entail the view that a name (as a kind of image) must be completely like the original *in the special sense* that the name must be an identical copy of the thing.

Nevertheless, Socrates explicitly produces "the two Cratyluses argument" to argue

against the view that an image must be completely like the original *in the special sense* that the image must be an identical copy of the thing (432b-d). Furthermore, Socrates explicitly ridicules the view that a name (as a kind of image) must be completely like the original (*in the special sense* that the name must be an identical copy of the thing) by claiming that everything would be double in that case, and no one would be able to say about anything whether it was the thing or the name (432d5-9). Finally, in his conclusion Socrates urges Cratylus to give up the view that a name (as a kind of image) must be completely like the original in the sense that the name must contain all and only the fitting letters (432d11-e3: […] μὴ ἀνάγκαζε πάντ' ἔχειν τὰ γράμματα, ἵνα κομιδῇ ᾖ τοιοῦτον οἷόνπερ οὗ ὄνομά ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ἔα καὶ τὸ μὴ προσῆκον γράμμα ἐπιφέρειν).

Thus, Socrates clearly argues against a straw man rather than against Cratylus' position and uses this straw man argument to urge Cratylus to give up his position.[21] Why does Socrates do this? A little earlier, we saw that Socrates traded on the ambiguous meaning of εἰκών in order to put pressure on Cratylus to accept the view that it is possible to distribute a name incorrectly. In this case, Socrates produces a straw man argument (by conflating two very different notions of being completely like something) in order to put pressure on Cratylus to accept the view that one can make a name more or less correctly (i.e. more or less like the thing) and still count as making the name. In both cases, Socrates seems to judge the chances of convincing Cratylus by means of fair and open argumentation to be so slim that his only chance of changing Cratylus' mind is by means of more forceful, if less fair-minded, forms of argumentation.

Having made Cratylus allow that a name can contain an unfitting letter (i.e. a letter which does not fit the thing being named), Socrates repeats the former point (cf. 431b-c) that a sentence (λόγος) can contain an unfitting name (i.e. a name which does not fit the thing spoken of) and adds the further point that a sentence (λόγος) can contain an unfitting sentence (λόγος) (i.e. a sentence which does not fit the thing spoken of). In both cases, Socrates explains, the thing is no less named and spoken of, as long the sentence contains an outline of the thing which the sentence is about (432e5-7: καὶ μηδὲν ἧττον ὀνομάζεσθαι τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ λέγεσθαι, ἕως ἂν ὁ τύπος ἐνῇ τοῦ πράγματος περὶ οὗ ἂν ὁ λόγος ᾖ). Also, when the sentence contains everything fitting, the thing is spoken of well, and when the sentence contains few fitting elements, the thing is spoken of badly (433a4-7: ὅταν γὰρ τοῦτο ἐνῇ, κἂν μὴ πάντα τὰ προσήκοντα ἔχῃ, λέξεταί γε τὸ πρᾶγμα, καλῶς ὅταν πάντα, κακῶς δὲ ὅταν ὀλίγα).

[21] While it seems generally recognized that Socrates' argument seems only loosely connected to Cratylus' claim, scholars have proposed different ways in which Socrates' argument and Cratylus' claim may in fact be (relatively) closely and relevantly connected. For example, David Sedley has proposed to interpret Socrates' argument as an *a fortiori* argument: since a name *cannot* be completely like the thing in the special sense of being an identical copy of the thing, a name *need not* be completely like the thing in the sense of containing all and only the fitting letters; Sedley 2003: 137-8; cf. Ademollo 2011: 367-8.

Then, returning to his main point, Socrates exhorts Cratylus to allow that, in both cases, the thing is spoken of. Socrates adds that they had better grant this point in order not to end up like those people who incur a fine for walking around Aegina late at night – that is, in order not truly to seem to have come in some similar way to "the things" later than they should (433a6-b1: λέγεσθαι δ' οὖν, ὦ μακάριε, ἐῶμεν, ἵνα μὴ ὄφλωμεν ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν Αἰγίνῃ νύκτωρ περιιόντες ὀψὲ ὁδοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐπὶ τὰ πράγματα δόξωμεν αὖ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ οὕτω πως ἐληλυθέναι ὀψιαίτερον τοῦ δέοντος). Alternatively, Socrates continues, Cratylus must look for some other notion of the correctness of names and not concede that the name is an indication of the thing by means of syllables and letters. For, if Cratylus will continue to claim both things, he will not be able to agree with himself (433b1-5: ἢ ζήτει τινὰ ἄλλην ὀνόματος ὀρθότητα, καὶ μὴ ὁμολόγει δήλωμα συλλαβαῖς καὶ γράμμασι πράγματος ὄνομα εἶναι. εἰ γὰρ ταῦτα ἀμφότερα ἐρεῖς, οὐχ οἷός τ' ἔσῃ συμφωνεῖν σαυτῷ).

What is Socrates talking about here? Clearly, Socrates really wants Cratylus to grant that a thing can be named or spoken of, even if the name or sentence does not contain all and only the fitting elements (i.e. even if the thing is named or spoken of badly). But what exactly is the point of the comparison between Socrates and Cratylus, on the one hand, and those people who incur fines for walking around late at night on Aegina, on the other hand? The people on Aegina are fined for walking around late at night when they should already be at home. Similarly, I suggest, Socrates and Cratylus risk seeming (δόξωμεν) to have moved around in circles when they should already have made their way to the real issues (ἐπὶ τὰ πράγματα). Socrates here appeals to Cratylus' sensitivity to his own appearance and reputation (δόξα), i.e. to what others will think of him. According to Socrates, others will think that they have made their way to the real issues later than they should. That is, others will censure Socrates and Cratylus if they continue doing what they are doing. And what they are doing is similar to what the people on Aegina are doing, i.e. going round and round (περιιόντες; cf. οὕτω πως). For this reason, Socrates and Cratylus risk not making their way to the real issues in time, just as the people on Aegina do not make it home in time.

But if Socrates and Cratylus have not yet made it to the real issues, what have they been doing? As I see it, Socrates here contrasts real issues with "mere arguments". Rather than dealing with real issues, Socrates and Cratylus have been dealing with Cratylus' radical views and arguments which have no real substance but are only fueled by Cratylus' stubbornness and overconfidence. In response, Socrates has produced fallacious arguments which also have no real substance but are fueled by Socrates' will to overcome Cratylus' stubbornness and overconfidence.

As a result, they have moved around in circles and now risk seeming to have spent far too much time on mere arguments. That is, they risk being censured for acting like eristics rather than philosophers. In order to avoid this risk, Socrates asks Cratylus either to accept the present conclusion or to look for some other correctness of names. The present conclusion is clearly that a name can contain an unfitting letter (i.e. that a name can be given incorrectly) and, more broadly, that a thing can be named and

spoken of, even if the name or sentence does not contain all and only the fitting elements. Alternatively, Socrates says, Cratylus must look for some other correctness of names and not grant that the name is an indication of the thing by means of letters and syllables. That is, the alternative facing Cratylus is to give up the idea that (the letters and syllables of) the name is an image of (the being of) the thing. If Cratylus continues to make both claims (i.e. that a name cannot contain any unfitting letter and that a name is an image of the thing), then he will not be able to agree with himself, since the very notion of the name as an image entails that a name *can* contain an unfitting letter. In response, Cratylus says that Socrates' claim seems reasonable, and that he adopts this new position (433b6-7: Ἀλλά μοι δοκεῖς γε, ὦ Σώκρατες, μετρίως λέγειν, καὶ οὕτω τίθεμαι).

Having – once more – made Cratylus agree, Socrates restates this new shared position as a preliminary for considering a new set of questions. First, Socrates and Cratylus agree that if a name is to be well given, it must have fitting letters, and the fitting letters are those which are similar to the things (433b9-c2). Second, if a name was badly given, the name would perhaps for the most part consist of fitting and similar letters (in order to be an image), but it would also have some unfitting feature, which would be the reason why the name was not good or well-produced (433c3-7). Socrates and Cratylus have already agreed on these points, but when Socrates asks Cratylus for confirmation (433c7: οὕτω φαμὲν ἢ ἄλλως;), Cratylus – once more – retracts his agreement: "I don't think we should fight about it, Socrates. But I don't like to say that something is a name, but that it has not been given well." (433c8-10: Οὐδὲν δεῖ οἶμαι διαμάχεσθαι, ὦ Σώκρατες· ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἀρέσκει γέ με τὸ φάναι ὄνομα μὲν εἶναι, μὴ μέντοι καλῶς γε κεῖσθαι). Socrates, not without some degree of frustration, asks Cratylus if he does not like the view that the name is an indication of the thing, or that some names are composed by "earlier" names, while other names are first names (433d1-5). When Cratylus confirms that he agrees with those views, Socrates makes him choose between two general views (433d8-434a2):

> ΣΩ. Ἀλλὰ τὰ πρῶτα εἰ μέλλει δηλώματά τινων γίγνεσθαι, ἔχεις τινὰ καλλίω τρόπον τοῦ δηλώματα αὐτὰ γενέσθαι ἄλλον ἢ αὐτὰ ποιῆσαι ὅτι μάλιστα τοιαῦτα οἷα ἐκεῖνα ἃ δεῖ δηλοῦν αὐτά; ἢ ὅδε μᾶλλόν σε ἀρέσκει ὁ τρόπος ὃν Ἑρμογένης λέγει καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοί, τὸ συνθήματα εἶναι τὰ ὀνόματα καὶ δηλοῦν τοῖς συνθεμένοις προειδόσι δὲ τὰ πράγματα, καὶ εἶναι ταύτην ὀρθότητα ὀνόματος, συνθήκην, διαφέρειν δὲ οὐδὲν ἐάντε τις συνθῆται ὥσπερ νῦν σύγκειται, ἐάντε καὶ τοὐναντίον ἐπὶ μὲν ᾧ νῦν σμικρόν, μέγα καλεῖν, ἐπὶ δὲ ᾧ μέγα, σμικρόν; πότερός σε ὁ τρόπος ἀρέσκει;
>
> ΚΡ. Ὅλῳ καὶ παντὶ διαφέρει, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ ὁμοιώματι δηλοῦν ὅτι ἄν τις δηλοῖ ἀλλὰ μὴ τῷ ἐπιτυχόντι.

> Soc. But if the first names are to become indications of things, do you know of another and better way for them to become indications than making them as like as possible to those things which they should indicate? Or

> do you like better the way which Hermogenes and many others maintain: that names are products of agreement and indicate things to those who made the agreement and knew the things beforehand; and that this is the correctness of names, agreement, and that it makes no difference whether one makes an agreement like the existing agreement, or, on the contrary, one makes an agreement to call "large" what is now called "small", and "small" what is called "large". Which of the two ways do you like?
>
> Crat. It makes all the difference in the world, Socrates, that one indicates whatever one indicates by means of a likeness and not by means of something random.

In this passage Socrates confronts Cratylus with a dilemma. Either he accepts the view that first names indicate things best by being as much like them as possible, or he accepts Hermogenes' initial view that names indicate things by agreement, and that agreement determines the correctness of names. Unsurprisingly, Cratylus reaffirms his commitment to the former view. But what exactly is the nature of this dilemma? Does the dilemma fairly represent the basic points of disagreement between the two views that either nature or agreement determines the correctness of names? Or is Socrates somehow presenting Cratylus with a false dilemma?

In the former chapter, we saw that Socrates identified and confirmed the principle of natural correctness that *a thing's name should indicate the thing's being*. We also saw that Socrates concluded that *the specific way* in which the first names indicate the being of things *as much as absolutely possible* is by imitating the being of things by means of letters and syllables (421c-427d, esp. 422c-e). As we noted, Socrates' formulation was best understood as implying that there is another less optimal way in which the first names can perform their function. As we have also seen, the most likely – indeed the only – candidate for this "other way" is that the first names indicate the being of things *by means of agreement*.

Against this background, Socrates does not seem to be setting out the present dilemma very fairly. First, while the real principle of natural correctness is that a thing's name should indicate the thing's being, Socrates picks out the principle that first names indicate things best by being as much like them as possible as the crucial feature of the account of natural correctness. Second, while the account of natural correctness (as constructed by Socrates) has left room for the possibility that the first names indicate the being of things by means of agreement, Socrates describes the alternative view (as initially maintained by Hermogenes) so as to imply that agreement determines the correctness of names, if names indicate things by means of agreement. That is, Socrates' presentation of the dilemma is liable to create the misleading impression that the account of natural correctness requires a first name to be as similar as possible to the thing's being in order to count as a naturally correct name of that thing, and that names only need to be shown to indicate things by agreement in order for the account of correctness by agreement to be vindicated.

To this extent, then, Socrates presents Cratylus with a false dilemma. At the same time, however, Socrates' presentation of the dilemma seems much less misleading when seen against the background of Cratylus' idiosyncratic account of natural correctness. As we have seen, Cratylus is committed to the view that there are only correctly given names *in the strong sense* that all names are as good as they can be. This idiosyncratic view commits Cratylus to the view that all names (as images) must be completely like the original *in the sense* that the name must contain all and only the fitting letters (since the best way for names to indicate a thing's being is to be an image of the thing's being). Thus, Socrates fairly represents the disagreement between the two views that either nature or agreement determines the correctness of names, as it appears from Cratylus' point of view. Socrates is justified in implying that for Cratylus the account of natural correctness requires a first name to be as similar as possible to the thing's being in order to count as a naturally correct name of that thing, and that for Cratylus names only need to be shown to indicate things by agreement in order for the account of correctness by agreement to be vindicated. Thus, Socrates has set up the dilemma in such a way that *if a name is shown to indicate a thing by means of agreement*, then Cratylus (but not Socrates) will be forced to make a choice between giving up the commitment to the general account of natural correctness (in favour of the account of correctness by agreement) or giving up the special commitment to the perfection of names. Let us now observe how the argument develops.

Having had Cratylus reaffirm the view that it makes all the difference in the world that one indicates whatever one indicates by means of a likeness and not by means of something random (434a1-2), Socrates has Cratylus reaffirm the view that if a name is to be like the thing (i.e. the thing's being), the elements of the name (i.e. the elements out of which one composes the first names) must necessarily be like the thing of which the name is an imitation. As a painter could not compose a painting so as to be like one of the things that are, unless the colours (out of which paintings are composed) were by nature like the things which the expertise of painting imitates, so names could never be like anything unless the elements out of which the names are composed (i.e. the letters) did not already possess a likeness with the things of which names are imitations (434a3-b9).

With these preliminaries, Socrates asks Cratylus to take part in the account of the first Greek names which Socrates and Hermogenes developed towards the very end of the second part of the dialogue (434b10-c1; cf. 426c-427d). Socrates begins by asking Cratylus whether Socrates and Hermogenes were right to say that the letter *rho* resembles motion, change, and hardness, and that the letter *labda* resembles smoothness, softness, and so on (434c1-6: ΣΩ. […] φέρε, καλῶς σοι δοκοῦμεν λέγειν ὅτι τὸ ῥῶ τῇ φορᾷ καὶ κινήσει καὶ σκληρότητι προσέοικεν, ἢ οὐ καλῶς; ΚΡ. Καλῶς ἔμοιγε. ΣΩ. Τὸ δὲ λάβδα τῷ λείῳ καὶ μαλακῷ καὶ οἷς νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν; ΚΡ. Ναί).[22] Next, Socrates turns

[22] As scholars have noted, Socrates and Hermogenes did not say that *rho* resembles hardness, but they are naturally taken as implying this, especially if we consider many of their examples (cf. 426e1-3:

the attention to the name for hardness and has Cratylus confirm that Athenians call the same thing "σκληρότης" which people from Eretria on Euboea call "σκληρότηρ" (434c). Socrates asks Cratylus two questions about this case.

The first question is about the two different endings in "σκληρότης" and "σκληρότηρ" (434c10-d6). Socrates asks Cratylus whether the *rho* and the *sigma* both resemble the same thing and the name indicates the same thing to the Eretrians (with final *rho*) and to the Athenians (with final *sigma*), or the name does not indicate the same thing to one of the two groups (because of the different ending). Cratylus confirms that the name indicates the same thing to both groups (434c10-d1: ΣΩ. Πότερον οὖν τό τε ῥῶ καὶ τὸ σῖγμα ἔοικεν ἀμφότερα τῷ αὐτῷ, καὶ δηλοῖ ἐκείνοις τε τὸ αὐτὸ τελευτῶντος τοῦ ῥῶ καὶ ἡμῖν τοῦ σῖγμα, ἢ τοῖς ἑτέροις ἡμῶν οὐ δηλοῖ; ΚΡ. Δηλοῖ μὲν οὖν ἀμφοτέροις). Next, Cratylus confirms that the name indicates the same in so far as *rho* and *sigma* are like each other, and that the two letters are at least like each other with regard to indicating motion (434d2-6: ΣΩ. Πότερον ᾗ ὅμοια τυγχάνει ὄντα τὸ ῥῶ καὶ τὸ σῖγμα, ἢ ᾗ μή; ΚΡ. Ἧι ὅμοια. ΣΩ. Ἦ οὖν ὁμοιά ἐστι πανταχῇ; ΚΡ. Πρός γε τὸ ἴσως φορὰν δηλοῦν). Cratylus adds a "perhaps" (ἴσως) to his final answer, thereby probably indicating not just some uncertainty about the answer but also the nervous expectation that Socrates is about to turn the answers against Cratylus' own position (cf. 431d9). In fact, Socrates does not turn these answers against Cratylus' position, at least not directly. Rather, Socrates uses these questions as preparation for his second line of questions, as we shall now see.

Socrates' second question is about the presence of the *labda* in "σκληρότης" and "σκληρότηρ" (434d7-435d1). Socrates begins by asking Cratylus whether the *labda* does not indicate the opposite of hardness (434d7-8: Ἦ καὶ τὸ λάβδα ἐγκείμενον; οὐ τὸ ἐναντίον δηλοῖ σκληρότητος;). Somewhat surprisingly, Cratylus responds that the *labda* in the name is perhaps incorrectly given and perhaps should be replaced with a *rho*, just as Socrates and Hermogenes earlier removed and inserted letters where it was needed (434d9-12: Ἴσως γὰρ οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἔγκειται, ὦ Σώκρατες· ὥσπερ καὶ ἃ νυνδὴ σὺ πρὸς Ἑρμογένη ἔλεγες ἐξαιρῶν τε καὶ ἐντιθεὶς γράμματα οὗ δέοι, καὶ ὀρθῶς ἐδόκεις ἔμοιγε. Καὶ νῦν ἴσως ἀντὶ τοῦ λάβδα ῥῶ δεῖ λέγειν). This is somewhat surprising because Cratylus, despite Socrates' efforts, has continued to reassert his view that there are only correctly given names in the strong sense that all names have all and only the fitting letters (on pain of not being names at all).

This development shows us the purpose of Socrates' first line of questions. By having Cratylus answer questions about "σκληρότης" and "σκληρότηρ" and their different endings Socrates made it clear that Cratylus regards "σκληρότης" and "σκληρότηρ" as indicating hardness. For this reason, Cratylus cannot choose the easy way out and claim that "σκληρότης" and "σκληρότηρ" indicate either nothing or something else than hardness (as in the previous discussions about the name "Hermogenes" and the

[…] ἔτι δὲ ἐν τοῖς τοιοῖσδε ῥήμασιν οἷον "κρούειν," "θραύειν," "ἐρείκειν," "θρύπτειν," "κερματίζειν," "ῥυμβεῖν, " […]). Cf. Schofield 1982: 74; Barney 2001: 124, n. 17; Sedley 2003: 139.

address to Cratylus; cf. 429c-430a).

At this point, we might think that Socrates has achieved what he set out to do, but rather than point out to Cratylus that he has, once more, contradicted his original view, Socrates continues the line of questioning. Socrates asks Cratylus to confirm that people understand each other when someone says "σκληρόν", and that Cratylus understands what Socrates says now (434e1-3: Εὖ λέγεις. τί οὖν; νῦν ὡς λέγομεν, οὐδὲν μανθάνομεν ἀλλήλων, ἐπειδάν τις φῇ "σκληρόν," οὐδὲ οἶσθα σὺ νῦν ὅτι ἐγὼ λέγω;). Cratylus confirms this but adds that this is because of habit (434e4: Ἔγωγε, διά γε τὸ ἔθος, ὦ φίλτατε). Socrates then asks Cratylus whether he thinks he is talking about something other than agreement when he mentions habit. More specifically, Socrates asks Cratylus to confirm that what he means by habit is that Socrates thinks of something (i.e. something hard) when he utters "σκληρόν", and Cratylus understands that Socrates thinks of this thing (434e5-8: Ἔθος δὲ λέγων οἴει τι διάφορον λέγειν συνθήκης; ἢ ἄλλο τι λέγεις τὸ ἔθος ἢ ὅτι ἐγώ, ὅταν τοῦτο φθέγγωμαι, διανοοῦμαι ἐκεῖνο, σὺ δὲ γιγνώσκεις ὅτι ἐκεῖνο διανοοῦμαι; οὐ τοῦτο λέγεις;).

When Cratylus confirms this, Socrates continues his questioning (435a2-d1):

> ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν εἰ γιγνώσκεις ἐμοῦ φθεγγομένου, δήλωμα σοι γίγνεται παρ' ἐμοῦ;
>
> ΚΡ. Ναί.
>
> ΣΩ. Ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνομοίου γε ἢ ὃ διανοούμενος φθέγγομαι, εἴπερ τὸ λάβδα ἀνόμοιόν ἐστι τῇ ῇ φῆς σὺ σκληρότητι· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχει, τί ἄλλο ἢ αὐτὸς σαυτῷ συνέθου καί σοι γίγνεται ἡ ὀρθότης τοῦ ὀνόματος συνθήκη, ἐπειδή γε δηλοῖ καὶ τὰ ὅμοια καὶ τὰ ἀνόμοια γράμματα, ἔθους τε καὶ συνθήκης τυχόντα; εἰ δ' ὅτι μάλιστα μή ἐστι τὸ ἔθος συνθήκη, οὐκ ἂν καλῶς ἔτι ἔχοι λέγειν τὴν ὁμοιότητα δήλωμα εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἔθος· ἐκεῖνο γάρ, ὡς ἔοικε, καὶ ὁμοίῳ καὶ ἀνομοίῳ δηλοῖ. ἐπειδὴ δὲ ταῦτα συγχωροῦμεν, ὦ Κρατύλε—τὴν γὰρ σιγήν σου συγχώρησιν θήσω—ἀναγκαῖόν που καὶ συνθήκην τι καὶ ἔθος συμβάλλεσθαι πρὸς δήλωσιν ὧν διανοούμενοι λέγομεν· ἐπεί, ὦ βέλτιστε, εἰ 'θέλεις ἐπὶ τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἐλθεῖν, πόθεν οἴει ἔξειν ὀνόματα ὅμοια ἑνὶ ἑκάστῳ τῶν ἀριθμῶν ἐπενεγκεῖν, ἐὰν μὴ ἐᾷς τι τὴν σὴν ὁμολογίαν καὶ συνθήκην κῦρος ἔχειν τῶν ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος πέρι; ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν καὶ αὐτῷ ἀρέσκει μὲν κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ὅμοια εἶναι τὰ ὀνόματα τοῖς πράγμασιν· ἀλλὰ μὴ ὡς ἀληθῶς, τὸ τοῦ Ἑρμογένους, γλίσχρα ᾖ ἡ ὁλκὴ αὕτη τῆς ὁμοιότητος, ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ᾗ καὶ τῷ φορτικῷ τούτῳ προσχρῆσθαι, τῇ συνθήκῃ, εἰς ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητα. ἐπεὶ ἴσως κατά γε τὸ δυνατὸν κάλλιστ' ἂν λέγοιτο ὅταν ἢ πᾶσιν ἢ ὡς πλείστοις ὁμοίοις λέγηται, τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ προσήκουσιν, αἴσχιστα δὲ τοὐναντίον.

> Soc. Then, if you understand me when I make my utterance, do you receive an indication from me?
>
> Crat. Yes.

> Soc. Because of something *unlike* what I think of when I make my utterance, if indeed *labda* is unlike the hardness of which you speak. But if this is so, haven't you exactly made an agreement with yourself, and does the correctness of the name not become a matter of agreement for you, since both the like and the unlike letters indicate something when they have become part of habit and agreement? And even if habit is not agreement, still it's not right to say that likeness is an indication, but rather the habit. For the latter, it seems, indicates by means of both like and unlike. Since we grant these things, Cratylus – for I'll take your silence as consent –, it's necessary, I think, that agreement and habit contribute something to the indication of what we think of when we speak. For, my good friend, if you're willing to turn to the case of number, how do you think you'll be able to apply like names to every single number, if you don't allow your consent and agreement to have some authority concerning the correctness of names? Well, I myself too like that names are as like as possible to things, but I'm afraid that, in reality – as Hermogenes said – dragging likeness around like this is tough, and that it's necessary to make use also of this lowly thing, agreement, for the correctness of names. For perhaps things are spoken of as well as possible when they are spoken of with elements all of which, or many as possible, are like, i.e. fitting, - and worst when the opposite is the case.

This passage proceeds in three main stages. In the first stage (435a2-b3), Socrates points out that Cratylus receives an indication (of hardness) when Socrates utters "σκληρόν", even though "σκληρόν" is unlike what Socrates thinks of (i.e. hardness) when he utters "σκληρόν", since *labda* is unlike hardness (435a2-7). Then, Socrates argues that if this is so, then Cratylus made an agreement with himself, and the correctness of the name (i.e. "σκληρόν") becomes a matter of agreement for Cratylus, since both the like and unlike letters (of "σκληρόν") indicate hardness when they become part of habit and agreement (435a7-10). Finally, Socrates argues that even if habit is not agreement, it still is not right to say that likeness is what indicates (hardness), but rather habit, since habit seems to indicate by means of both like and unlike (435a10-b3).

In the second stage (435b3-c2), Socrates argues that since they agree on this (i.e. the particular case regarding "σκληρόν"), it is necessary that agreement and habit contribute to the indication of what people think of when they speak (435b3-6). As a reason for this Socrates points to the case of number and argues that Cratylus will not be able to apply like names to every single number if he does not allow his own consent and agreement to have some authority concerning the correctness of names (435b6-c2).

In the third stage (435c2-d1), Socrates, expressing his own view, says that he likes that names are as like as possible to things (435c2-3). At the same time, Socrates suspects that dragging the principle of likeness around as they have done (i.e. trying to make the principle of likeness do all the work in explaining how names indicate things)

is tough, and that they need to make use of this lowly thing - agreement - to account for the correctness of names (435c4-7). As a reason for this Socrates makes the general statement that things are perhaps spoken of as well as possible when one speaks of them with as many elements like the things as possible - and worst when the opposite is the case (435c7-d1).

What exactly is Socrates' conclusion in this passage? And how does he establish this conclusion? Many scholars have found that Socrates here concludes that agreement, and not nature, determines the correctness of names.[23] Other scholars have found that Socrates here concludes that agreement and nature both somehow determine the correctness of names (while perhaps still holding that natural correctness is something better than correctness by agreement).[24] Again, other scholars have found that Socrates here concludes that neither the account of natural correctness nor the account of correctness by agreement is satisfactory.[25]

In my view, previous scholars have overlooked two crucial aspects of this passage. First, Socrates here concludes a dialectical argument (aimed against Cratylus' idiosyncratic views) which began with the construction of the false dilemma (433d-e). Second, Socrates' conception of natural correctness leaves room for the notion that names indicate the being of things by agreement (and not just by nature, i.e. by likeness). When we recognize these two aspects of the passage, we can see that Socrates does not change or discard his account of natural correctness, but only concludes that Cratylus will be forced to abandon the account of natural correctness and accept the account of correctness by agreement unless he gives up the idiosyncratic view that there are only correctly given names, not just in the very strong sense that all names contain all and only fitting letters (on pain of not being names), but also in the weaker sense that all names are images of things (on pain of not being names).

In the first stage of the passage (435a2-b3), Socrates concludes his dialectical argument against Cratylus' idiosyncratic views. Back at 433d-e, Socrates asked Cratylus to choose between two views: either names indicate things by agreement and agreement determines the correctness of names, or names indicate things by being like things and nature determines the correctness of names. Cratylus accepted this dilemma (reasonably, given his idiosyncratic views) and responded that it makes all the difference in the world that names indicate things by being like them (434a1-2). In the present passage, Socrates points out that the name "σκληρόν" indicates hardness, even though it is not like hardness, since *labda* is unlike hardness (435a2-7; cf. 434e1-435a1).

Next, Socrates brings out the consequence (435a7: εἰ δὲ τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχει, [...]). Since "σκληρόν" indicates hardness albeit not by being like hardness, Cratylus must have made an agreement with himself to understand that "σκληρόν" indicates hardness (τί ἄλλο ἢ αὐτὸς σαυτῷ συνέθου). And since Cratylus has accepted the initial dilemma

[23] R. Robinson 1969a; Annas 1982; Schofield 1982; Ademollo 2011.
[24] Grote 1865: 535, 542-3; Steinthal 1890: 106-112; Méridier 1931: 15, 28; Sedley 2003: 138-146.
[25] Goldschmidt 1940: 166-9; Guthrie 1978: 16; Barney 2001: 123-142.

(according to which agreement determines the correctness of names if names indicate things by agreement), the correctness of the name "σκληρόν" must be a matter of agreement for Cratylus (435a8: καί **σοι** γίγνεται ἡ ὀρθότης τοῦ ὀνόματος συνθήκη). The reason for this, Socrates repeats, is that they have agreed that both the like (i.e. *rho*) and the unlike (i.e. *labda*) letters indicate hardness, once they have become part of habit and agreement (435a9-10: ἐπειδή γε δηλοῖ καὶ τὰ ὅμοια καὶ τὰ ἀνόμοια γράμματα, ἔθους τε καὶ συνθήκης τυχόντα;). Furthermore, Socrates remarks, even if habit is not agreement, it still remains true that habit (and not likeness) is what indicates hardness in the case of "σκληρόν", since habit indicates by means of by like (in this case *rho*) and unlike (in this case *labda*).

In the second stage (435b3-c2), Socrates brings out the general conclusion from his dialectical argument against Cratylus' idiosyncratic views (435b3: ἐπειδὴ δὲ ταῦτα συγχωροῦμεν [...]). Socrates and Cratylus agree that Cratylus' idiosyncratic views about the perfection of names has brought Cratylus to regard the name "σκληρόν", not as imperfect but still naturally correct, but as only correct by agreement. For this reason, Cratylus must *either* accept that agreement and habit make some contribution to the indication of what people think about when they speak (435b5-6: ἀναγκαῖόν που καὶ συνθήκην τι καὶ ἔθος συμβάλλεσθαι πρὸς δήλωσιν ὧν διανοούμενοι λέγομεν) *or* give up the account of natural correctness in favour of the account of correctness by agreement. At this point, Socrates is clearly generalizing from the case of "σκληρόν" to the account of natural correctness. Since they have an existing name which can indicate by means of habit and agreement, they have to make it a general feature of the account of natural correctness that names can indicate by means of habit and agreement.

As a further argument for this general conclusion Socrates points to the specific case of numbers: how does Cratylus think he will be able to apply like names to every single number, if he does not allow his consent and agreement to have some authority concerning the correctness of names? (435b7-c2: πόθεν οἴει ἕξειν ὀνόματα ὅμοια ἑνὶ ἑκάστῳ τῶν ἀριθμῶν ἐπενεγκεῖν, ἐὰν μὴ ἐᾷς τι τὴν σὴν ὁμολογίαν καὶ συνθήκην κῦρος ἔχειν τῶν ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητος πέρι;). By putting things this way Socrates does not say clearly whether he thinks it is possible to apply like names to every single number, only that the only chance this has of being possible is that Cratylus accepts that consent and agreement (and not just likeness) have some authority concerning the correctness of names. In other words, Cratylus will only have a chance of being able to apply (imperfectly) like names to every single number if he accepts that consent and agreement (and not only likeness) can indicate things.

That is, I take Socrates' two phrases - that agreement and habit make some contribution to the indication of what people think about when they speak (435b5-6), and that consent and agreement have some authority concerning the correctness of names (435b8-c2) - to amount to the same thing. Consent and agreement have some authority concerning the correctness of names *only in the sense* that agreement and habit make some contribution to the indication of what people think about when they speak. Thus,

Socrates remains committed to the view that nature, and not agreement, determines the correctness of names (and to the principle that a thing's name should indicate the thing's being).

In the third stage (435c2-d1), Socrates emphasizes his own point of view. (Thus, the third stage contrasts with the first stage in which Socrates emphasizes Cratylus' point of view.) Socrates explains that he likes that names are as like as possible to things (435c2-3: ἐμοὶ μὲν οὖν καὶ αὐτῷ ἀρέσκει μὲν κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν ὅμοια εἶναι τὰ ὀνόματα τοῖς πράγμασιν). By expressing himself this way, Socrates does not express the belief that names are as like as possible to things (something which the case of "σκληρόν" has disproved), nor does he express nostalgia for the idea that names should be as like things as possible.[26] Rather, Socrates expresses his continued preference for, as well as commitment to, the principle that names should be as like things as possible. At the same time, Socrates expresses the suspicion that dragging the principle of likeness around (as Cratylus suggests they should do; cf. 433d9-12) will be "tough and cheap" (435c4-5: ἀλλὰ μὴ ὡς ἀληθῶς, τὸ τοῦ Ἑρμογένους, **γλίσχρα** ᾖ ἡ ὁλκὴ αὕτη τῆς ὁμοιότητος).

What does Socrates mean by this? Given the explicit reference to Hermogenes' earlier remark (cf. 414bc) and the implicit reference to Cratylus' recent suggestion (433d), we can safely assume that Socrates is talking about the treatment of particular names (inserting, removing, and transposing letters) to make them more like the things of which they are names. Socrates suspects that this treatment will be γλίσχρα which we can translate "tough and cheap". How should we understand this? We might take Socrates' statement straightforwardly as meaning that this treatment of particular names will be hard work without any real benefit. However, Hermogenes' earlier remark seems ironic rather than straightforward. Hermogenes says that Socrates' treatment of the name τέχνη is tough and cheap, but what he really means is that Socrates' treatment is (too) easy and generous (in changing the letters). Similarly, in the *Republic*, Adeimantus says (ironically) that Socrates is not in the habit of explaining things by means of images to which Socrates responds (equally ironically) that Adeimantus should rather listen to the image so that he can see even more clearly how tough and cheap is Socrates' production of images (ἄκουε δ' οὖν τῆς εἰκόνος, ἵν' ἔτι μᾶλλον ἴδῃς ὡς γλίσχρως εἰκάζω). Given these parallel passages, we should take Socrates' statement ironically as meaning that this treatment of particular names will be (too) easy and generous. It will be too easy and generous because it will (have to) violate principles of moderation and plausibility.

For this reason, Socrates suspects that they will need to make use also of this "lowly" thing, agreement, for the correctness of names (435c5-7: ἀναγκαῖον δὲ ᾖ καὶ τῷ φορτικῷ τούτῳ προσχρῆσθαι, τῇ συνθήκῃ, εἰς ὀνομάτων ὀρθότητα). Again, I take Socrates to be using this phrase as equivalent to the two previous phrases: that agreement and habit make some contribution to the indication of what people think about

[26] *Pace* Schofield 1982: 80.

when they speak (435b5-6), and that consent and agreement have some authority concerning the correctness of names (435b8-c2). They will need to make use of the notion of agreement in their account of correctness *only in the sense* that they need to accept that agreement and habit make some contribution to the indication of what people think about when they speak.

Finally, Socrates states that things are spoken of as well as possible when they are spoken of with elements all of which, or many as possible, are like, i.e. fitting, - and worst when the opposite is the case (435c7-d1: ἐπεὶ ἴσως κατά γε τὸ δυνατὸν κάλλιστ' ἂν λέγοιτο ὅταν ᾖ πᾶσιν ἢ ὡς πλείστοις ὁμοίοις λέγηται, τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ προσήκουσιν, αἴσχιστα δὲ τοὐναντίον). This concluding statement is a restatement of Socrates' original view that the specific way in which names indicate the beings of things as well as absolutely possible is by imitating the being of things by means of letters and syllables (and that the other way in which names can indicate the beings of things is by means of agreement). At the same time, the statement is a contradiction of Cratylus' idiosyncratic view that there are only correctly given names, either in the strong sense that all names (as images) contain all and only fitting letters, or in the weaker sense that all names are images.

## 3.3 The name as an instrument for teaching and the knowledge of things (435d1-439b9)

Having made this final attempt to make Cratylus give up the radical view that there are only correctly given names, Socrates turns to the subject of the power (or function) of names (435d1-3: τόδε δέ μοι ἔτι εἰπὲ μετὰ ταῦτα, τίνα ἡμῖν δύναμιν ἔχει τὰ ὀνόματα καὶ τί φῶμεν αὐτὰ καλὸν ἀπεργάζεσθαι;). Socrates learns that, according to Cratylus, names have the power to teach - in the sense that whoever has knowledge of names also has knowledge of things (435d4-6: Διδάσκειν ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες, καὶ τοῦτο πάνυ ἁπλοῦν εἶναι, ὃς ἂν τὰ ὀνόματα ἐπίστηται, ἐπίστασθαι καὶ τὰ πράγματα.)

In response, Socrates first clarifies and restates Cratylus' position (435d7-436a8). During this process, Socrates finds out that Cratylus holds that whoever has knowledge of names also has knowledge of things, because a thing's name and the thing itself are like each other, and all things which are like each other belong to the same expertise (435e1-3: [...] ἐπείπερ ὅμοιον τυγχάνει ὂν τῷ ὀνόματι, τέχνη δὲ μία ἄρ' ἐστὶν ἡ αὐτὴ πάντων τῶν ἀλλήλοις ὁμοίων). Further, Cratylus holds that the kind of teaching of beings (διδασκαλία τῶν ὄντων) he is describing is both the best and the only kind of teaching there is (435e6-436a2). Finally, Cratylus holds that the kind of teaching of beings which he is describing is not just the only way to teach and learn about things, but also the only way to inquire into and discover things (436a3-8).

Having restated and clarified Cratylus' position, Socrates attempts to show Cratylus that if someone "follows the names" in the search for things, there is a considerable risk of being deceived (436a9-b3: Φέρε δὴ ἐννοήσωμεν, ὦ Κρατύλε, εἴ τις ζητῶν τὰ

πράγματα ἀκολουθοῖ τοῖς ὀνόμασι, σκοπῶν οἷον ἕκαστον βούλεται εἶναι, ἆρ' ἐννοεῖς ὅτι οὐ σμικρὸς κίνδυνός ἐστιν ἐξαπατηθῆναι;). Socrates explains: Cratylus' position clearly implies that the first name-giver made the names like the things, i.e. such as he conceived of the things (436b5-8). But if the name-giver gave the names according to an incorrect conception of things, and if we follow the name-giver and his names in our attempt to learn or discover the nature of things, then we shall be deceived (436b9-11).

In response, Cratylus expresses the suspicion that this is not the case because the name-giver must have given the names knowingly, or else they would not be names, as Cratylus claimed a while back (436b12-c2: Ἀλλὰ μὴ οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀλλ' ἀναγκαῖον ᾖ εἰδότα τίθεσθαι τὸν τιθέμενον τὰ ὀνόματα· εἰ δὲ μή, ὅπερ πάλαι ἐγὼ ἔλεγον, οὐδ' ἂν ὀνόματα εἴη).[27] Cratylus proceeds to offer the greatest piece of evidence (μέγιστον τεκμήριον) for the view that the first name-giver did not fall short of grasping the truth: otherwise all the names would never accord with the name-giver's conception of things (436c4-5: οὐ γὰρ ἄν ποτε οὕτω σύμφωνα ἦν αὐτῷ ἅπαντα.).

Socrates produces two arguments against this view: an abstract argument about Cratylus' inference from accordance (or consistency) to truth (436c7-d8) and a concrete argument about Cratylus' view of the Greek names as consistent with each other and with the conception of the name-maker (436d8-437c8).

First, Socrates compares name-making to the construction of a geometrical proof and points out that it would not be strange (οὐδὲν ἄτοπον) if the name-giver initially fell short of grasping the truth and subsequently made all the names accord (i.e. be consistent) with his own *incorrect* conception of the nature of things, just as a geometrical proof might begin with a small and unseen falsehood and have all the subsequent steps (following from this falsehood) agree with each other (436c8-d4). In both cases, it would be wrong to infer from the consistency of the subsequent steps to the truth of the starting-point.

Second, Socrates explains why he would be surprised to find that the Greek names are consistent with each other (436d8-e1: οὐ μέντοι ἀλλὰ θαυμάζοιμ' ἂν εἰ καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα συμφωνεῖ αὐτὰ αὑτοῖς.). Socrates begins by summing up the result of the interpretation of the Greek names in the second part of the dialogue: that the Greek names signify universal flux (436e2-4: ὡς τοῦ παντὸς ἰόντος τε καὶ φερομένου καὶ ῥέοντός φαμεν σημαίνειν ἡμῖν τὴν οὐσίαν τὰ ὀνόματα.). Then, Socrates returns to the inquiry into the Greek names of virtues and vices and related psychological phenomena (437a2-c8). Socrates proposes an alternative interpretation of the name ἐπιστήμη which they earlier interpretated as signifying that the soul follows things as they are moving (cf. 412a1-2: καὶ μὴν ἥ γε ἐπιστήμη μηνύει ὡς φερομένοις τοῖς πράγμασιν ἑπομένης τῆς ψυχῆς […]). In the present passage, Socrates claims that the name is ambiguous and rather seems to indicate that knowledge brings our soul to a standstill by

[27] This reference to 429a-b shows that Cratylus, despite Socrates' efforts, remains committed to the view that there are only correctly given names.

the things (437a3-5: [...] ὡς ἀμφίβολόν, καὶ μᾶλλον ἔοικε σημαίνοντι ὅτι ἵστησιν ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τοῖς πράγμασι τὴν ψυχὴν ἢ ὅτι συμπεριφέρεται [...]). Socrates adds that several other names of psychological virtues (e.g. ἱστορία or μνήμη) indicate rest rather than motion (437a8-b4). Finally, Socrates interprets several names of psychological vices (e.g. ἀκολασία or ἀμαθία) as indicating motion, just as the names of psychological virtues were previously shown to do (437b4-c3).

Socrates concludes (437c3-8):

> καὶ οὕτως, ἃ νομίζομεν ἐπὶ τοῖς κακίστοις ὀνόματα εἶναι, ὁμοιότατ' ἂν φαίνοιτο τοῖς ἐπὶ τοῖς καλλίστοις. οἶμαι δὲ καὶ ἄλλα πόλλ' ἄν τις εὕροι εἰ πραγματεύοιτο, ἐξ ὧν οἰηθείη ἂν αὖ πάλιν τὸν τὰ ὀνόματα τιθέμενον οὐχὶ ἰόντα οὐδὲ φερόμενα ἀλλὰ μένοντα τὰ πράγματα σημαίνειν.
>
> And thus, the names which we regard as names of the worst things would seem completely like the names of the best things. And I think one can find many other names if one makes the effort. On this basis, one would instead come to think that the name-giver doesn't signify things as moving and being moved but rather as standing still.

Thus, Socrates takes himself to have shown, not only that the inference from consistency to truth is mistaken, but also that the Greek names are not consistent with each other. Thereby, Socrates has defended his initial claim that if we follow the name-giver and his names in our attempt to learn or discover the nature of things, we run the risk of being deceived since the name-giver might have given the names according to an incorrect conception of things.

Cratylus does not challenge Socrates' arguments, but instead points out that the majority of the Greek names signified flux rather than stability (437d1-2). Cratylus' point seems to be that the minority of names can safely be disregarded as irrelevant accretions, and that the majority of names still can be treated as correct and as expressing the name-giver's conception of the nature of things as being in universal flux. In response, Socrates mockingly asks Cratylus whether he wants them to count the names as votes and let the number of names determine which names are correct (437d3-438c3):

> ΣΩ. Τί οὖν τοῦτο, ὦ Κρατύλε; ὥσπερ ψήφους διαριθμησόμεθα τὰ ὀνόματα, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἔσται ἡ ὀρθότης; ὁπότερα ἂν πλείω φαίνηται τὰ ὀνόματα σημαίνοντα, ταῦτα δὴ ἔσται τἀληθῆ;
>
> ΚΡ. Οὔκουν εἰκός γε.
>
> ΣΩ. Οὐδ' ὁπωστιοῦν, ὦ φίλε.[28]

[28] The editors of the new OCT regard 437d10-438b7 as containing two versions of the same passage (following Jachmann 1942: 319-330), both of which they regard as (possibly) written by Plato

> ΚΡ. Οἶμαι μὲν ἐγὼ τὸν ἀληθέστατον λόγον περὶ τούτων εἶναι, ὦ Σώκρατες, μείζω τινὰ δύναμιν εἶναι ἢ ἀνθρωπείαν τὴν θεμένην τὰ πρῶτα ὀνόματα τοῖς πράγμασιν, ὥστε ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι αὐτὰ ὀρθῶς ἔχειν.
>
> Soc. So what, Cratylus? Shall we count the names as votes? Is their correctness to consist in this? Whatever the names signify more, that'll be the truth?
>
> Crat. No, that's not right.
>
> Soc. No, it certainly isn't, my friend.
>
> Crat. But, in my view, Socrates, the truest account of this matter is that some superhuman power gave the first names to things, so that they are necessarily correct.

Cratylus apparently grants that not all Greek names are consistent, but still maintains that the first name-giver did not fall short of grasping the truth, and that the names given by the first name-giver are therefore necessarily correct (cf. 436b12-c2). In support of this view, Cratylus now appeals to the view that the expertise of name-making (*qua* custom-giving) does not exist among humans in the same way as other forms of expertise (recall Socrates' question, at 429a2-3: Πότερον οὖν καὶ ταύτην φῶμεν τὴν τέχνην ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐγγίγνεσθαι ὥσπερ καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἢ μή; […]). Despite Socrates' efforts to make Cratylus give up this view about the exceptional status of the name-giver *qua custom-giver* (429b-435d), Cratylus still holds on to this extreme view (at least when it comes to the *first* name-giver), even when he has granted that not all (Greek) names are consistent (or correct). As Socrates goes on to point out, however, Cratylus' views about the exceptional status of the first name-giver and about the necessary correctness of the *first* names (even if accepted) does not provide reasons to remove Socrates' original concern that if someone "follows the names" in the search for things, there is a considerable risk of being deceived (cf. 436a9-b3).

Socrates first asks Cratylus whether this name-giver would give names which were contrary to his own conception, even though he was a daimon or a god (438c4-5).

(following Ernst Kapp). In line with this general understanding of the problem, David Sedley has proposed that one of the versions (roughly "versio A" in the new OCT) belongs to an earlier version of the *Cratylus* while the other version (roughly "versio B" in the new OCT) belongs to the present version of the dialogue; Sedley 2003: 7-10.

The matter is complicated, and no completely satisfactory solution seems forthcoming. In my view, however, none of the two versions belong in the present version of the *Cratylus*. To put it briefly, either version reads like an artificial interruption of an otherwise smooth line of argument, and Cratylus' reply at 438b8-c3 reads much better as a further attempt to defend the view that the first name-giver did not fall short of grasping the truth (even if not all Greek names are consistent) than as an attempt to reply to Socrates' question (at 437d10-438b7) about how the first name-givers could give the first names on the basis of knowledge since there were no names from which they could obtain knowledge. That is, in my view, either version reads like (if less harshly than) the passage 385b2-d1 in the first part of the dialogue. For other views and further discussion, see Ademollo 2011: 489-95.

That is, since the Greek names have turned out to be inconsistent, it would seem that Cratylus' name-giver has given names which are inconsistent with his own conception of the nature of things, unless his conception of things is also inconsistent, which would be unacceptable, at least on a Socratic conception of what a god or daimon is. Cratylus seems to agree and suggests that one of the two groups of names was not among the first names given by this name-giver (438c6). But, as Socrates points out, this leaves them with the same problem as before. How can they know which of the two groups was among the first names? (438c7-8) Socrates and Cratylus agree that the question should not be settled simply by majority, and Socrates points out that the question cannot be settled by appeal to further names (438c8-d5). Thus, the only alternative, according to Socrates, is to search for something other than names which can show the truth about the nature of things (438d5-8). In which case, as Socrates points out, it is possible to learn about beings without names (438e2-3: Ἔστιν ἄρα, ὡς ἔοικεν, ὦ Κρατύλε, δυνατὸν μαθεῖν ἄνευ ὀνομάτων τὰ ὄντα, εἴπερ ταῦτα οὕτως ἔχει).

Having made Cratylus concede that the kind of teaching of beings which he initially described is not the *only* way to learn about beings (cf. 435e6-436a8), Socrates attempts to make Cratylus concede that this kind of teaching of beings is not the *best* way to learn about beings (438e5-439b9). First, Socrates asks Cratylus to confirm that the right way to learn about beings is to study beings through other beings or beings through themselves (438e5-7: Διὰ τίνος ἄλλου οὖν ἔτι προσδοκᾷς ἂν ταῦτα μαθεῖν; ἆρα δι' ἄλλου του ἢ οὗπερ εἰκός τε καὶ δικαιότατον, δι' ἀλλήλων γε, εἴ πῃ συγγενῆ ἐστιν, καὶ αὐτὰ δι' αὑτῶν; […]). Second, Socrates recalls their previous agreement that the names which have been given well are like the things of which they are names, and are images of those things (439a1-4). Third, Socrates has Cratylus confirm that even if it is possible to learn about things through names and through things (439a6-7: Εἰ οὖν ἔστι μὲν ὅτι μάλιστα δι' ὀνομάτων τὰ πράγματα μανθάνειν […]), the best way to learn about things is to study the truth on the basis of the truth and not on the basis of an image of the truth (439a6-b2).

Finally, Socrates concludes (439b4-9):

> ΣΩ. Ὄντινα μὲν τοίνυν τρόπον δεῖ μανθάνειν ἢ εὑρίσκειν τὰ ὄντα, μεῖζον ἴσως ἐστὶν ἐγνωκέναι ἢ κατ' ἐμὲ καὶ σέ· ἀγαπητὸν δὲ καὶ τοῦτο ὁμολογήσασθαι, ὅτι οὐκ ἐξ ὀνομάτων ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον αὐτὰ ἐξ αὑτῶν καὶ μαθητέον καὶ ζητητέον ἢ ἐκ τῶν ὀνομάτων.
>
> ΚΡ. Φαίνεται, ὦ Σώκρατες.
>
> Soc. Well, on the one hand, understanding in what way we should learn or discover things, is perhaps too large a task for you and me. On the other hand, one must be content with having agreed that one should not base one's learning or search for things on names; no, one should learn and search for things on the basis of things themselves much rather than on the basis of names.
>
> Crat. Apparently.

What is Socrates doing in this section? (435d-439b)? And how does what Socrates in this section relate to the claims Socrates has made earlier in the dialogue? Clearly, interpretations of what Socrates does in this section will differ, depending on what one takes Socrates as having claimed earlier in the dialogue. We can begin by distinguishing three types of interpretation.

One might take Socrates here as simply making explicit (and reinforcing) the implicit point in the second part of the dialogue that names cannot be relied upon to provide knowledge of things but only of the name-giver's view of things.[29] Or one might take Socrates as making the *new* point that names cannot be relied upon to provide knowledge of things but only of the name-giver's view of things, thereby changing his earlier view of names as being reliable to provide knowledge of things. Or, again, one might take Socrates here as arguing against Cratylus' idiosyncratic view that interpreting names is the only and best way to teach and learn about things, while maintaining his own earlier view that names can provide knowledge of things, even if they cannot be relied upon to do this.[30]

I disagree with all three types of interpretation because they all take Socrates, in the second part of the dialogue, as supporting (or as purporting to support) the general account of natural correctness *by explaining and illustrating his conception of etymology*, i.e. the view that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things.

According to the first type of interpretation, Socrates merely purports to support the general account in this way, while his real aim is to undermine the very same account while pretending to put it into practice. According to the second type of interpretation, Socrates' real aim, in the second part of the dialogue, is to support the general account by explaining and illustrating his conception of etymology, but at this point, in the third part of the dialogue, Socrates has changed his mind and no longer believes that names can be relied upon to provide knowledge of things. According to the third type of interpretation, Socrates' real aim, in the second part of the dialogue, was to support the general account by explaining and illustrating his conception of etymology and here, in the third part of dialogue, Socrates remains committed to the view that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge, but argues against Cratylus' view that interpreting names is the only and best way to teach and learn about things.

In my view, as mentioned in the introduction to the previous chapter, we must acknowledge that nowhere in the *Cratylus* does Socrates hold (or purport to hold) that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things. As I also mentioned in that introduction, the mistaken assumption that Socrates in the *Cratylus* holds (or purports to hold) that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things seems to be the result of (among other things) three mistaken interpretations in each of the three parts of the dialogue. First, the interpretation of the account of the names

[29] Schofield 1982: 67-68; Ademollo 2011: 427-448.
[30] Sedley 2003: 159-162.

as an instrument for teaching and for separating being as saying that names can teach in the sense that names can provide knowledge of things. Second, the interpretation of the principle of natural correctness as saying that a thing's name should *reveal* or *disclose* the thing's being (or nature). Third, the interpretation of Socrates' claims in the present section of the dialogue (435d-439b) as leaving open the question whether, or perhaps even implying that, names have the power to teach in the sense that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things (cf. the third type of the interpretation outlined above).

In the previous chapters, I have tried to show that the first two interpretations are mistaken. But what about the third? Towards the end of this section, as we have seen, Socrates has Cratylus confirm that even if it is possible to learn about things through names and through things, the best way to learn about things is to study the truth on the basis of the truth and not on the basis of an image of the truth (439a6-b2). Also, Socrates concludes the section by saying that one should not base one's learning or search for things on names, and that one should learn and search for things on the basis of things themselves much rather than on the basis of names (439b6-8).

One could try to read these claims as leaving open the question whether, or perhaps even implying that, names have the power to teach in the sense that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things. First, one could take the concessive clause in the first claim (i.e. "even if it is possible to learn about things through names and through things") as leaving open whether, or perhaps even implying that, it is possible to learn about things through names (although the best way to do this is through things). Second, one could take the first part of Socrates' conclusion (i.e. "one should not base one's learning or search for things on names") as not ruling out that one can learn about things on the basis of names, but only as recommending that one should learn about things on the basis of things (presumably because that is a more reliable approach). Third, one could take the second part of Socrates' conclusion ("one should learn and search for things on the basis of things themselves much rather than on the basis of names") as leaving open whether, or perhaps even implying that, it is possible to learn about things on the basis of names (although one should much rather learn about things on the basis of things).

In view of Socrates' general strategy in this part of the dialogue, however, it seems clear that, on closer inspection, Socrates should be taken as implying that the interpretation of names cannot provide knowledge of things. That is, we should remember that, in the present passage (438e5-439b9), Socrates' main aim is to make Cratylus concede that interpretating names is not the *best* way to learn about beings. His main aim is not to express his own view of the matter. Given this background, Socrates' concessive clause in the first claim (i.e. "even if it is possible to learn about things through names and through things") should be taken as *bracketing for the moment* the question about the possibility of learning about things through names in order to press the point that interpreting names cannot be the *best* way to learn about things. Again, Socrates' conclusion, at 439b4-8, is aimed against Cratylus' view that interpreting names

is the *best* way to learn about things. Thus, the first part of Socrates' conclusion (i.e. "one should not base one's learning or search for things on names") should be taken as implying that interpretating names is not the *best* way to learn about beings, *because* one should not base one's learning or search for things on names, *because* interpreting names cannot provide knowledge of things. Similarly, the second part of Socrates' conclusion ("one should learn and search for things on the basis of things themselves much rather than on the basis of names") should be taken as supplementing and reinforcing the first part of the conclusion by stating positively that one should learn and search for things on the basis of things themselves *much rather than on the basis of names*, not because learning and searching for things on the basis of names is possible (albeit not to be preferred), but because learning and searching for things on the basis of names *is not possible*.

Thus, I regard as mistaken the interpretation of Socrates' claims in the present section of the dialogue (435d-439b) as leaving open the question whether, or perhaps even implying that, names have the power to teach in the sense that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things, just as I regard as mistaken the interpretation of the account of the names as an instrument for teaching and for separating being as saying that names can teach in the sense that names can provide knowledge of things and the interpretation of the principle of natural correctness as saying that a thing's name should *reveal* or *disclose* the thing's being (or nature). And thus, I take myself to have made the case that Socrates in the *Cratylus* nowhere holds (or purports to hold) that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things.

## 3.4 Cratylean confidence and Socratic admonition (439b10-440e7)

Having made Cratylus agree that one should learn about things on the basis of things themselves and not on the basis of names (438d-439b), Socrates returns to the point about the risk of being deceived (cf. 436b-438d). Earlier, Socrates warned Cratylus against the possible risk of self-deception: for all we know, Socrates argued, the first name-giver *might* have given the first Greek names according to an incorrect conception of things. In the present passage, the warning becomes more urgent and the risk more real (439b10-c6):

> Ἔτι τοίνυν τόδε σκεψώμεθα, ὅπως μὴ ἡμᾶς τὰ πολλὰ ταῦτα ὀνόματα ἐς ταὐτὸν τείνοντα ἐξαπατᾷ, εἰ τῷ ὄντι μὲν οἱ θέμενοι αὐτὰ διανοηθέντες γε ἔθεντο ὡς ἰόντων ἁπάντων ἀεὶ καὶ ῥεόντων—φαίνονται γὰρ ἔμοιγε καὶ αὐτῷ οὕτω διανοηθῆναι—τὸ δ', εἰ ἔτυχεν, οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει, ἀλλ' οὗτοι αὐτοί τε ὥσπερ εἴς τινα δίνην ἐμπεσόντες κυκῶνται καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐφελκόμενοι προσεμβάλλουσιν [...].

> Again, let us consider the following point, so as not to be deceived by these many names pointing in the same direction. Let us consider if, on the one hand, the name-givers really did give the names thinking that everything moves and flows - for I myself believe that they thought this - and, on the other hand, if they did, that's not the way things are, but having themselves fallen into a kind of whirlpool and got into a spin they are dragging us too in after them [...].

Socrates agrees with Cratylus that the first Greek name-givers gave the first Greek names according to a conception of things as being in constant flux (εἰ τῷ ὄντι μὲν οἱ θέμενοι αὐτὰ διανοηθέντες γε ἔθεντο ὡς ἰόντων ἁπάντων ἀεὶ καὶ ῥεόντων—φαίνονται γὰρ ἔμοιγε καὶ αὐτῷ οὕτω διανοηθῆναι). At the same time, describing with some powerful language the continuing influence of the first name-givers on the present, Socrates warns Cratylus that, in his view, this conception of things is wrong (τὸ δ', εἰ ἔτυχεν, οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει, ἀλλ' οὗτοι αὐτοί τε ὥσπερ εἴς τινα δίνην ἐμπεσόντες κυκῶνται καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐφελκόμενοι προσεμβάλλουσιν). That is, Socrates warns Cratylus that the first Greek name-givers *did* give the first Greek names according to an incorrect conception of things.

In line with their understanding of Socrates' "etymological" method, scholars generally take Socrates here as ascribing the conception of things as being in constant flux to the early name-givers *on the basis of* his interpretation of Greek names in the second part of the dialogue.[31] That is, scholars take this passage as confirming that, even if the interpretation of names cannot be relied upon to provide knowledge of things, it *can* provide knowledge of the name-givers' view of things.

However, this interpretation does not sit well with Socrates' recent suggestion that we cannot be sure what conception of things the first Greek name-giver had *simply by looking at the Greek names* (cf. 436b-438d). Also, as we saw in the previous chapter, Socrates' interpretation of Greek names bears witness to the methodological principle that one must interpret names by using what is (presumed) known about the bearer of the name and *about the name-giver's view of things*, not the other way around.

But if that is true, how has Socrates reached the view that the first Greek name-givers gave the first Greek names according to a conception of things as being in constant flux? The answer, I believe, is that Socrates draws on his independent views about the early Greek tradition as brought out, for instance, in the *Theaetetus*. At the beginning of the philosophical discussion in the *Theaetetus* (151d7-152b5), Socrates identifies Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as perception with Protagoras' human measure doctrine (151e8-152a4). Subsequently, the interlocutors set about uncovering the underpinnings of the human measure doctrine (152c-160e) and then start looking for arguments that will convince Theaetetus (and even Protagoras himself) that the human measure doctrine is false (160e-183c).

[31] Sedley 2003: 41, 161; Ademollo 2011: 238-9.

At the very beginning of this process, Socrates shows Theaetetus that Protagoras' human measure doctrine comes to the same thing as the theory of universal flux (152c-d; cf. 160d-e). In fact, Socrates explains, all the leading figures of early and contemporary Greek culture - with the exception of Parmenides - were in agreement about the theory of universal flux (152e1-10):

> ΣΩ. [...] καὶ περὶ τούτου πάντες ἑξῆς οἱ σοφοὶ πλὴν Παρμενίδου συμφερέσθων, Πρωταγόρας τε καὶ Ἡράκλειτος καὶ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, καὶ τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ ἄκροι τῆς ποιήσεως ἑκατέρας, κωμῳδίας μὲν Ἐπίχαρμος, τραγῳδίας δὲ Ὅμηρος, <ὃς> εἰπών—
>
> Ὠκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν
>
> πάντα εἴρηκεν ἔκγονα ῥοῆς τε καὶ κινήσεως· ἢ οὐ δοκεῖ τοῦτο λέγειν;
> ΘΕΑΙ. Ἔμοιγε.
>
> Soc. [...] And as regards this point of view, let us take it as a fact that all the wise men of the past, with the exception of Parmenides, stand together. Let us take it that we find on this side Protagoras and Heraclitus and Empedocles; and also the masters of the two kinds of poetry, Epicharmus in comedy and Homer in tragedy. For when Homer talked about
>
> 'Ocean, begetter of gods, and Tethys their mother',
>
> he made all things the offspring of flux and motion. - Or don't you think he meant that?
> Theaet. Oh, I think he did.[32]

As evidence of Homer's commitment to the theory of universal flux Socrates cites a special line which occurs twice in the *Iliad* (14.201; 14.302): 'Ocean, begetter of gods, and Tethys their mother' (Ὠκεανόν τε θεῶν γένεσιν καὶ μητέρα Τηθύν). Similarly, in the *Cratylus*, when Socrates introduces the notion of universal flux into his interpretation of the name of Hestia (401b-402d), Socrates cites the very same line by Homer, adding that the same idea is expressed by Hesiod and citing very similar lines by Orpheus (402b-c). That is, both in the *Theaetetus* and the *Cratylus* Socrates takes Homer - as well as Hesiod and Orpheus in the *Cratylus* - as expressing an explicit commitment to the theory of universal flux when he describes two rivers - Ocean and Tethys - as the ancestors of the gods.

Furthermore, as we can see from the *Theaetetus*, Socrates believes that the Greek intellectual tradition as a whole is dominated by the theory of universal flux. The basis for this general belief, apart from "explicit" commitments such as those by Homer and

[32] Translation from Burnyeat 1990

Orpheus, seems to be a theory about how the early wise men responded to the world around them. In the *Cratylus*, Socrates turns this into something like a caricature of people becoming dizzy from turning around and around in their search for understanding (411b-c), but in the *Theaetetus* Socrates gives a more serious account of the apparently rather strong evidence (σημεῖα ἱκανά) which led the early wise men to the theory of universal flux. Among these reasons were the apparently correct observations that motion seems to be a source of good for the human soul and body as well as animals, life, and the universe as a whole (153a-d).

Given Socrates' general view of the early Greek wise men, it is only natural for him to suppose that the first Greek name-givers - that is, the first custom-givers who gave the current Greek lexicon its systematic form - were committed to the theory of universal flux. Thus, Socrates has reached the view that the first Greek name-givers gave the first Greek names according to a conception of things as being in constant flux, not by interpreting Greek names, but by studying the early Greek poets and thinkers and by speculating about the early Greek wise men's intellectual response to the world around them.

Now, returning to the present passage of the *Cratylus*, Socrates proceeds to provide a rather brief and abstract argument for the view that the conception of things as being in constant flux is wrong (439c6-440c1). First, Socrates has Cratylus agree that there is something beautiful in itself, something good in itself, and so on for every single being (439c6-d2). Socrates explains that he is not concerned with a beautiful face or something similar, but with the beautiful in itself. Cratylus confirms that the beautiful in itself is always the way it is (439d5-7: ΣΩ. [...] ἀλλ' αὐτό, φῶμεν, τὸ καλὸν οὐ τοιοῦτον ἀεί ἐστιν οἷόν ἐστιν; ΚΡ. Ἀνάγκη).

Having established this basic agreement, Socrates points out four radical consequences of the conception of things as being in constant flux. First, on this conception of things, it is impossible to address something - in the sense of saying of it that it is this thing (i.e. by naming it) and that it is such and such (i.e. by subsequently saying something about the thing, thereby producing a sentence) (439d8-11).

Second, on this conception of things, it is impossible for anything to *be*, since it is never in the same state. If at some time it were in the same state, it clearly would not be changing at that time (which would contradict the conception of things as being in constant flux) (439e1-5).

Third, on this conception of things, it is impossible for anything to be known, since it becomes something else and like something else at the same time someone approaches it in order to get to know it; and there is no knowledge which understands something as being in no state (439e7-440a4).

Fourth, on this conception of things, it is reasonable to claim that there is no knowledge. For, on the one hand, if knowledge does not change from being knowledge, it remains and is knowledge (which is impossible given the conception of things as being in constant flux). If, on the other hand, the very form of knowledge changes, at that moment it would pass into another form than knowledge and it would not be

knowledge. And if it always changes, it would always not be knowledge, and from this argument there would neither be something to know nor something to be known (440a6-b4). That is, according to Socrates, if we want to maintain that there is knowing and being knowing, and there is something beautiful, something good, and so on for every being, then these things (i.e. the beings) are not like a (river) stream or motion (440a4-c1).

In his final address to Cratylus, Socrates turns from argumentation to admonition (440c1-e7):

> ΣΩ. [...] ταῦτ' οὖν πότερόν ποτε οὕτως ἔχει ἢ ἐκείνως ὡς οἱ περὶ Ἡράκλειτόν τε λέγουσιν καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοί, μὴ οὐ ῥᾴδιον ᾖ ἐπισκέψασθαι, οὐδὲ πάνυ νοῦν ἔχοντος ἀνθρώπου ἐπιτρέψαντα ὀνόμασιν αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν αὑτοῦ ψυχὴν θεραπεύειν, πεπιστευκότα ἐκείνοις καὶ τοῖς θεμένοις αὐτά, διισχυρίζεσθαι ὥς τι εἰδότα, καὶ αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τῶν ὄντων καταγιγνώσκειν ὡς οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς οὐδενός, ἀλλὰ πάντα ὥσπερ κεράμια ῥεῖ, καὶ ἀτεχνῶς ὥσπερ οἱ κατάρρῳ νοσοῦντες ἄνθρωποι οὕτως οἴεσθαι καὶ τὰ πράγματα διακεῖσθαι, ὑπὸ ῥεύματός τε καὶ κατάρρου πάντα χρήματα ἔχεσθαι. ἴσως μὲν οὖν δή, ὦ Κρατύλε, οὕτως ἔχει, ἴσως δὲ καὶ οὔ. σκοπεῖσθαι οὖν χρὴ ἀνδρείως τε καὶ εὖ, καὶ μὴ ῥᾳδίως ἀποδέχεσθαι—ἔτι γὰρ νέος εἶ καὶ ἡλικίαν ἔχεις—σκεψάμενον δέ, ἐὰν εὕρῃς, μεταδιδόναι καὶ ἐμοί.
>
> ΚΡ. Ἀλλὰ ποιήσω ταῦτα. εὖ μέντοι ἴσθι, ὦ Σώκρατες, ὅτι οὐδὲ νυνὶ ἀσκέπτως ἔχω, ἀλλά μοι σκοπουμένῳ καὶ πράγματα ἔχοντι πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐκείνως φαίνεται ἔχειν ὡς Ἡράκλειτος λέγει.
>
> ΣΩ. Εἰς αὖθις τοίνυν με, ὦ ἑταῖρε, διδάξεις, ἐπειδὰν ἥκῃς· νῦν δέ, ὥσπερ παρεσκεύασαι, πορεύου εἰς ἀγρόν· προπέμψει δέ σε καὶ Ἑρμογένης ὅδε.
>
> ΚΡ. Ταῦτ' ἔσται, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἀλλὰ καὶ σὺ πειρῶ ἔτι ἐννοεῖν ταῦτα ἤδη.

> Soc. [...] Now, whether this is how things are, or things are how the Heracliteans and many others claim, is not, I suspect, an easy question to examine, nor, I think, does a really sensible man leave it to names to take care of himself and his soul, having put his trust in them and the ones who gave them, and affirming his own view confidently as someone who knows something; nor does this man condemn himself and the beings, thinking that nothing is sound at all, but that everything flows and leaks like jars, and believing that things are in the same state as those people who are sick with catarrh: that all things are dominated by rheum and catarrh. Perhaps this is how things are, Cratylus, but perhaps not. Therefore, you should examine this question in a brave and good way, and not accept an answer just like that — you're still young and have the right age —, and

> when you've examined this question and may have found an answer, you should share it with me as well.
>
> Crat. I shall do that. But you should know this, Socrates: not even now am I someone who has not examined these questions, but to me - as I examine these questions and have my problems with them - it seems that things are much more the way Heraclitus claims.
>
> Soc. Then you shall teach me when you return, my friend. As for now, do what you've prepared for, and go to the country. Hermogenes here will send you on your way.
>
> Crat. Alright, Socrates, but you should also try to think more about these things.

In this final exchange, Socrates warns Cratylus against having confidence in his own knowledge, against putting his trust in names, and against showing contempt for himself and all beings. At the same time, Socrates urges Cratylus to act bravely and well in the examination of the theory of universal flux (and in philosophy in general) and to exercise independent thinking and critical thought. More generally, Socrates urges Cratylus to take better care of himself and his soul by holding up the ideal of the sensible man and contrasting the ideal with Cratylus' character.

Thus, in his final attempt to influence Cratylus, Socrates broadens the ethical and philosophical scope of the conversation so as to include the fundamental Socratic concern with taking care of the soul and honouring the nature of things. Earlier in the discussion, Socrates took issue with Cratylus' radical and idiosyncratic views about the natural correctness of names as well as his characteristic overconfidence and stubbornness regarding those views. These issues are clearly still present in Socrates' warning against putting trust in names and name-givers, but they are also linked to very general questions about how to take care of oneself, how to do philosophy, and how to regard oneself and the world.

In several ways, the discussion between Socrates and Cratylus is not unlike the discussion between Socrates and Callicles in the *Gorgias*. In both cases, Socrates seems to be aware from early on in the conversation that he will not succeed in changing his interlocutor's views or his character. And yet, in both cases, Socrates makes an extended attempt at convincing the other person, leading to a final attempt at admonishing him, in which Socrates adopts a rhetorical monologue form and makes a forceful appeal to the interlocutor's deepest ethical concerns.

But why engage in discussion with people who seem impossible to convince, people whose overconfidence is only overshadowed by the radicalism of their views, people such as Cratylus, Callicles, and Thrasymachus? The answer, I believe, is given by Socrates himself in Book 6 of the *Republic*. Following a passage in which Socrates has proposed a radical reform of how a city should handle philosophy (497a5-498c4), Adeimantus says (498c5-d7):

> Ὡς ἀληθῶς μοι δοκεῖς, ἔφη, λέγειν γε προθύμως, ὦ Σώκρατες· οἶμαι

μέντοι τοὺς πολλοὺς τῶν ἀκουόντων προθυμότερον ἔτι ἀντιτείνειν οὐδ' ὁπωστιοῦν πεισομένους, ἀπὸ Θρασυμάχου ἀρξαμένους.

Μὴ διάβαλλε, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἐμὲ καὶ Θρασύμαχον ἄρτι φίλους γεγονότας, οὐδὲ πρὸ τοῦ ἐχθροὺς ὄντας. πείρας γὰρ οὐδὲν ἀνήσομεν, ἕως ἂν ἢ πείσωμεν καὶ τοῦτον καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους, ἢ προΰργου τι ποιήσωμεν εἰς ἐκεῖνον τὸν βίον, ὅταν αὖθις γενόμενοι τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐντύχωσι λόγοις.

Εἰς μικρόν γ', ἔφη, χρόνον εἴρηκας.

Εἰς οὐδὲν μὲν οὖν, ἔφην, ὥς γε πρὸς τὸν ἅπαντα.

'Well, Socrates, that certainly does strike me as a strongly held view. But I think it makes most listeners even more strongly opposed to you. They're not going to believe a word of it. Look at Thrasymachus, for a start.'

'Don't start making trouble between Thrasymachus and me, now that we've just become friends. Not that we were enemies before, of course. We're not going to relax our efforts until we either persuade him and the others, or give them a bit of a helping hand for that moment in some future life when they find themselves in the same sort of discussion.'

'I see. Not long to wait, then.'

'No time at all,' I said, 'compared with eternity [...]' (transl. T. Griffith)

Given his belief in the immortality and reincarnation of the soul, Socrates believes he should try to benefit, not only those who can be persuaded to value justice for its own sake, people such as Glaucon and Adeimantus, but also someone like Thrasymachus who cannot be persuaded to change his mind in this life-time, but perhaps can be influenced just enough to have a chance in the next life. Similarly, in the *Cratylus*, Socrates has tried to benefit, not only Hermogenes who has been convinced (at least for the time being) by the Socratic version of the account of natural correctness, but also Cratylus who has seemed almost impossible to convince from the very beginning.

In his final line of the dialogue, Socrates suggests that he and Cratylus resume the discussion when Cratylus has returned from the country (440e3-4: Εἰς αὖθις τοίνυν με, ὦ ἑταῖρε, διδάξεις, ἐπειδὰν ἥκῃς· νῦν δέ, ὥσπερ παρεσκεύασαι, πορεύου εἰς ἀγρόν). Considered by itself, this suggestion seems best taken as a literal and straightforward invitation to further discussion in the near future. But Socrates then adds: "Hermogenes here will send you on your way" (440e5: προπέμψει δέ σε καὶ Ἑρμογένης ὅδε.). As scholars have noted, this choice of words associates Hermogenes with Hermes *propompos*, i.e. the Hermes who sends the souls on their way to Hades.[33] Thus, Socrates suggests that the next discussion between Cratylus and himself will take place, not in this life, but in the next.

[33] Barney 2001: 160; Sedley 2003: 155-156, 171-173.

# Conclusion

In this thesis, I have tried to show that Socrates' apparent aims in the three parts of the dialogue are his real aims. In each chapter, I noted an apparent problem for this line of interpretation. In the first chapter, I pointed out that Socrates' argument about the nature of things is invalid, and that the argument about the nature of actions is insufficiently specific to serve as decisive evidence in favour of the account of natural correctness. In the second chapter, I observed that Socrates' interpretations of Greek names show that, according to Socrates, the interpretation of names cannot provide knowledge of things. In the third chapter, I stated that, in the famous passage at 433d-435d, Socrates confronts Cratylus with a dilemma and concludes that agreement, and not nature, determines the correctness of names, or that agreement and nature both somehow determine the correctness of names. In each chapter, I then proposed a way of solving the apparent problem and thereby maintaining the view that Socrates' apparent aims in the three parts of the dialogue are his real aims. The basic idea was to understand Socrates as seeking to achieve his aims by employing a general strategy which is especially designed to deal with the relevant interlocutor's views and character.

In the first chapter, I proposed that Hermogenes should be understood as a Socratic philosopher, and that Socrates' argument about the nature of actions is invalid, not because Socrates merely pretends to believe in the natural correctness of names, but because Socrates is simply reminding Hermogenes of a Socratic view which, as a Socratic philosopher, he already holds. Further, I proposed that Socrates' argument about the nature of actions is insufficiently specific to serve as decisive evidence in favour of the account of natural correctness, not because Socrates merely pretends to believe in the natural correctness of names, but because he is preparing the ground for the decisive arguments which come towards the end of the first part of the dialogue. Thus, the argument about the nature of actions is an important part of the Socratic basis for the general account of the natural correctness of names.

In the second chapter, I proposed that Socrates responds to Hermogenes' request for a more specific account of natural correctness, not by explaining and illustrating (or purporting to explain and illustrate) the view that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things. Rather, Socrates responds to Hermogenes' request by (among other things) identifying and confirming the principle of natural correctness

that a thing's name should indicate the thing's being, just as Socrates responds to Glaucon and Adeimantus' request for a more specific account of justice in Book 2 of the *Republic* by identifying and confirming the principle of justice that each of the elements in the soul performs its own function and leaves the other functions to the other elements. Therefore, the fact that Socrates' interpretations of Greek names show that, according to Socrates, the interpretation of names cannot provide knowledge of things does not show that Socrates merely pretends to believe in the natural correctness of names, simply because this conception of etymology never formed part of Socrates' account of natural correctness in the first place.

In the third chapter, I proposed that Cratylus should be understood as a stubborn and overconfident character with extreme and idiosyncratic views, and that Socrates judges the chances of convincing Cratylus by means of fair and open argumentation to be so slim that his only chance of changing Cratylus' mind is by means of more forceful, if less fair-minded, forms of argumentation. First, Socrates trades on the ambiguity between image (εἰκών) and picture (ζωγράφημα) in order to make Cratylus agree that it is possible to distribute a name incorrectly. Then, Socrates argues against a straw man rather than against Cratylus' position in order to urge Cratylus to give up the view that a name (as a kind of image) must be completely like the original in the sense that the name must contain all and only the fitting letters. Finally, Socrates presents Cratylus with a false dilemma between the account of the natural correctness of names and the notion of signification by agreement in order to make Cratylus give up the idiosyncratic view that there are only correctly given names, not just in the very strong sense that all names contain all and only fitting letters (on pain of not being names), but also in the weaker sense that all names are images of things (on pain of not being names). Thus, Socrates presents Cratylus with this dilemma, not because he himself does not believe in the account of natural correctness, but because he wants Cratylus to give up his extreme and idiosyncratic version of the account of natural correctness.

The main aim of this approach to the *Cratylus* was to show that Socrates' apparent aims in the three parts of the dialogue are his real aims. But the approach has also provided new interpretations of many important passages in the *Cratylus* and several central notions in Socrates' account of natural correctness. I have tried to show that, if we keep in mind Hermogenes' character as an experienced Socratic philosopher and Socrates' strategy as especially designed to deal with a Socratic such as Hermogenes, we get a very different, and much more Socratic, understanding of Socrates' account of natural correctness. Among the most important examples, I have offered a new interpretation of the account of the name as an instrument for teaching and for separating being, just as I have offered a new interpretation of Socrates' notion of the custom-giver. But I have also provided new interpretations of other, even more central, notions. First, regarding Socrates' understanding of the principle of natural correctness (i.e. the principle that a thing's name should indicate the thing's being) I have argued that, according to Socrates, the correctness of names only depends on their possession of the appropriate form, and not on their possession of some specific matter (i.e. on its

possession of letters and syllables which bear a likeness to the thing's being). Second, regarding Socrates' understanding of the interpretation of names, I have argued that, according to Socrates, one must use what is (presumed) known about the thing named and the name-giver in order to interpret the thing's name, and that the interpretation of names cannot provide knowledge of things, nor even of the name-giver's view of things.

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# English summary

This thesis offers an interpretation of Plato's *Cratylus*. The thesis consists of three chapters corresponding to the three parts of the dialogue. Each chapter offers an attempt to show that, despite reasons for doubt, we should treat Socrates' apparent aims in the conversation with the other interlocutors as his real aims. That is, in the first and second part of the dialogue, we should treat Socrates as genuinely attempting to convince Hermogenes that there is a natural correctness of names. Similarly, in the third part of the dialogue, we should treat Socrates as genuinely attempting to convince Cratylus to give up his extreme and idiosyncratic account of the natural correctness of names. Each chapter offers an attempt to show that we can remove the reasons for doubt by understanding Socrates as seeking to achieve his aims by employing a strategy which is especially designed to deal with the relevant interlocutor's views and character. In the first chapter, it is argued that Hermogenes is presented as a Socratic philosopher, and that the strategy behind Socrates' initial arguments (385e-387d) is to remind Hermogenes of Socratic views he already shares and to prepare him for the decisive arguments in favour of natural correctness which come later in the first part of the dialogue (388c-390e). For this reason, we should not doubt that Socrates genuinely attempts to convince Hermogenes, just because his argument about the nature of things is invalid and his argument about the nature of actions is insufficiently specific to serve as decisive evidence in favour of the account of natural correctness. In the second chapter, it is argued that Socrates responds to Hermogenes' request for a more specific account of natural correctness by identifying a model of natural correctness in the principle that a thing's name should signify the thing's nature, and not by explaining and illustrating (or purporting to explain and illustrate) the view that the interpretation of names can provide knowledge of things. For this reason, we should not doubt that Socrates genuinely attempts to convince Hermogenes, just because Socrates believes that the interpretation of names cannot provide knowledge of things. In the third chapter, it is argued that Cratylus is presented as a stubborn and overconfident character with extreme and idiosyncratic views, and that Socrates uses more forceful, if less fair-minded, forms of argumentation in his conversation with Cratylus because he regards it as impossible to change Cratylus' mind by means of fair and open argumentation. For this reason, we should not doubt that Socrates genuinely attempts to convince Cratylus to give up his extreme and idiosyncratic account of the natural correctness of names, just because Socrates brings Cratylus to the conclusion that agreement determines or co-determines the correctness of names.

# Dansk resumé

Denne afhandling tilbyder en fortolkning af Platons *Kratylos*. Afhandlingen består af tre kapitler svarende til dialogens tre dele. Hvert kapitel præsenterer et forsøg på at vise, at vi - på trods af grund til tvivl - bør behandle Sokrates' tilsyneladende mål i samtalen med de andre samtalepartnere som hans virkelige mål. I den første og anden del af dialogen bør vi altså opfatte Sokrates sådan, at han gør et oprigtigt forsøg på at overbevise Hermogenes om, at der er en naturlig navnekorrekthed. I tredje del af dialogen bør vi på tilsvarende vis opfatte Sokrates sådan, at han gør et oprigtigt forsøg på at overbevise Kratylos om at opgive sin ekstreme og idiosynkratiske teori om naturlig navnekorrekthed. Hvert kapitel præsenterer et forsøg på at vise, at vi kan fjerne de forskellige grunde til tvivl ved at forstå Sokrates sådan, at han søger at opnå sine mål ved at anvende en strategi, der er særligt udformet til at håndtere den givne samtalepartners synspunkter og personlighed. I det første kapitel hævdes det, at Hermogenes er præsenteret som en sokratisk filosof, og at strategien bag Sokrates' indledende argumenter (385e-387d) er at minde Hermogenes om sokratiske synspunkter, han allerede deler, og at forberede ham på de afgørende argumenter for naturlig korrekthed, som kommer senere i den første del af dialogen (388c-390e). Af denne grund bør vi ikke tvivle på, at Sokrates gør et oprigtigt forsøg på at overbevise Hermogenes, bare fordi hans argument om tings natur er ugyldigt og hans argument om handlingers natur ikke er tilstrækkeligt specifikt til at tjene som afgørende bevis for teorien om naturlig korrekthed. I det andet kapitel hævdes det, at Sokrates besvarer Hermogenes' anmodning om en mere specifik redegørelse for naturlig korrekthed ved at idenficere en model af naturlig korrekthed i princippet om, at en tings navn bør betegne tingens natur og ikke ved (at foregive) at forklare og illustrere det synspunkt, at fortolkning af navne kan give viden om ting. Af denne grund bør vi ikke tvivle på, at Sokrates gør et oprigtigt forsøg på at overbevise Hermogenes, bare fordi Sokrates mener, at fortolkning af navne ikke kan give viden om ting. I det tredje kapitel hævdes det, at Kratylos er præsenteret som en stædig og overdrevet selvsikker person med ekstreme og idiosynkratiske synspunkter, og at Sokrates benytter en mere kraftfuld, men også mindre fair, argumentationsform i sin samtale med Kratylos, fordi han anser det for umuligt at ændre Kratylos' opfattelse med en mere fair og åben argumentationsform. Af denne grund bør vi ikke tvivle på, at Sokrates gør et oprigtigt forsøg på at overbevise Kratylos om at opgive sin ekstreme og idiosynkratiske teori om naturlig navnekorrekthed, bare fordi Sokrates bringer Kratylos til den konklusion, at overenskomst bestemmer - eller med til at bestemme - navnes korrekthed.